

**HISTORY  
OF  
EASTLAND COUNTY,  
TEXAS**

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**By EDWIN T. COX**

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*History of*  
**Eastland County,  
Texas**



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**Eastland County,  
Texas**

By  
**Edwin T. Cox**

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*To the memory of*

*Edwin T. Cox, Jr.*

*July 31, 1906 - December 10, 1947*

1132533

Proud is that person who can trace  
His ancestry to patriot sires  
Who for the birthright of a race,  
Lit freedom's everlasting fires.

— Selected



## Foreword

Carl Sandburg after years of study said, of Abraham Lincoln, "The fellow grows on you."

So it is with Eastland County. The more one studies its history, the more fascinating the subject becomes — or so it has been with this observer.

Three things give uniqueness to Eastland County: the oil boom; the Santa Claus bank robbery; and Old Rip.

True, there have been many booms; but the one which began when the McCleskey roared in at Ranger was the biggest of them all. Probably more money was spent in a year than was ever expended in any other area of like size in the history of the world. Take the value of the gold produced in California in 1849, add the best year's output of both the Klondike and Goldfield, double the total, and *still* you do not have an amount equal to the value of the oil produced in the Ranger field in a year. And where can you find more colorful individuals than those which figure in the rush: Tex Rickard, Rex Beach, John Ringling the circus king, Jake Hamon, Billy Sunday, Byron Parrish — the police chief who could juggle tin cans with bullets until both his pistols were empty, gamblers, killers, a Belgium count, Jess Willard, and thousands of men just out of service in World War I, seeking adventure and wealth at "Rainbow's End"? And for sheer drama, the oil boom offers such stories as the three-cornered duel in which three shots were fired and each shot claimed a life, the Merriman Cemetery which was "not for sale", and the man who was fined \$75 for murder!

The holdup of the bank at Cisco by a gang led by a bandit in Santa Claus costume was the most spectacular crime in the history of the Southwest, surpassing any single event in which Billy the Kid or Jesse James ever participated.

And Old Rip, the horned frog that emerged alive from (supposedly) 31 years' entombment in a courthouse cornerstone, became the most celebrated animal since the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

My own first-hand knowledge of Eastland County goes back only to 1921 when you could still see the county's first sheriff, an old gentleman with a cane, sitting in the Spring sunshine on a bench in the courthouse yard; and you could talk to "Uncle Billie" McGough, who took part in the county's last Indian fight. C. U. Connellee, who founded the town of Eastland, was still an active figure in business and civic affairs; and the Connellee

Theater, built almost on the very spot where his log cabin had stood, witnessed the presentation of Broadway shows with such stars as Raymond Hitchcock, Willie and Eugene Howard, Margaret Anglin, Lasses White and Crane Wilbur. And there was still vivid talk of such prior events as the trials of Sam Grant and Jim Miller and of the libel suit in which the evangelist, Bob Shuler, was his own attorney, so that it seemed almost to the young editor of the *Oil Belt News* that he had actually been present.

But my friend, Mr. Cox, in his book, goes much farther back, to the very beginnings. He has spent his long and useful life in the county; he has helped to shape its history; he knows its people and he loves every foot of its soil. So he is admirably fitted for his task. And he has unfolded a most interesting and accurate account. His is a valuable book which deserves a place on every Texan's shelf.

— BOYCE HOUSE

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## Preface

I was born in Parker County, Texas, November 21, 1870 and was carried to Stephenville, Erath County, soon thereafter where my father, J. H. Cox and his brother, J. C. Cox engaged in the sale of general merchandise. After Eastland County was organized and the location of the county site at Eastland, the brothers established a business of the same character in the new town in 1876. James C. Cox moved to Eastland to manage the business there and my father remained at Stephenville.

In 1876, the business at Eastland was discontinued. Its stock was moved to Stephenville and merged with the stock there. Shortly after the merger, a fire, originating in an adjoining building destroyed the entire stock, which was not insured. This left the brothers flat broke but with a good credit.

About January 1st, 1881, they again established a business in Eastland, and both families moved there. The writer has been a citizen of Eastland County to the present time.

The families of both my father and mother had been pioneering since their coming to America years before the colonies fought their war for independence. Members of each family have enlisted in all the wars engaged in by the United States since its organization. However, in the War Between the States, they were allied with the Confederacy.

The Cox family made stops in the Carolinas and Georgia on its way from Virginia to Texas. They stopped in Van Zandt County in 1856 and spent the winter, moving on to Parker County the following spring. Here they settled about eight miles west of Weatherford, where many of the descendants of the pioneers still live.

My mother's family, the Davenports, were Virginians and Pennsylvanians who came to those colonies in the early years of their settlement. On their way to Texas, they stopped for some years in Alabama. They settled in Smith County, Texas, about 1845. Many of their descendants still reside there.

Grandfather Davenport, a volunteer in the war between the United States and Mexico, was wounded in the battle of Monterrey. He was a frontiersman by nature and lived in many parts of the State, moving West as the population shifted in that direction. He lived in Comanche County near the town of that name in 1850. This was some years before the organization of the county and before the founding of the town of Comanche. He had lived at Mansfield and Fort Worth, in Tarrant County; Weather-

ford in Parker County; and also in the counties of Coleman, Runnels and Taylor, before establishing his final residence at Big Springs, Howard County, in the early 1880's.

Having this background and having made Eastland County my home for more than sixty-five years, make it possible for me to write of the early times and people with full appreciation of the many difficulties and hardships which they encountered. Since I grew up with the development of the country, I can record its progress and the connected incidents with reasonable understanding and appreciation.

In 1904, Mrs. George Langston published a very interesting and instructive volume entitled "A History of Eastland County". The writer, and many others, have read this with pleasure and profit. Since then, however, much time has passed and many changes have taken place which the writer feels should be chronicled and preserved for the information and entertainment of those now living and generations to come.

At the time of Mrs. Langston's writing, no town in the county could boast of a population of more than twenty-five hundred souls; and its entire population was but little more than that attained by Ranger in the boom days. The Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company had not then drilled the McCleskey well near Ranger which started the greatest boom ever staged in this State or the United States.

The boll weevil then had not been instrumental in reducing the production of cotton in the county from more than fifty thousand bales in one season to less than three hundred bales in 1939; and thereby lessening the cash received from more than two million dollars in the years of 1906, 1908, and 1925, to less than fifteen thousand dollars in 1939.

In gathering material for this volume, the writer finds that he is years too late to get much first-hand information from the trail blazers themselves. Most of the actors in the colorful incidents of the past are in their graves, and those still living are feeble in mind and body. Yet he has diligently followed every line of investigation which promised information of value, has carefully checked such information which he has personally acquired by examination of available records, and has recorded only what seemed to him to be the facts in the matters considered. He feels that one who attempts to write of a people should stay as close to the facts as possible, but should be in entire sympathy with those of whom he writes.





Present Eastland County Courthouse



The courthouse where the horned frog, "Old Rip" was found.



"Old Rip"



First Courthouse built on the Square in 1883, burned in 1896.



Eastland County's Second Courthouse



Cotton Day in Eastland, Texas (around 1906)



Eastland County's First Courthouse as it appears at the present time.



The home of John Tarter who settled in the Tudor community very early.  
It was afterwards known as the O. A. Smith place.





High School, Eastland, Texas



An early scene in Eastland County

# History of Eastland County

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND OF EASTLAND COUNTY

#### Its Creation and Description

Eastland County was created February 1, 1858, and was organized December 2, 1873. The county was named in honor of William M. Eastland, the first white man to draw a black bean at Rancho Salada, Mexico. Mr. Eastland was born at Woodfarm, Woodford County, Kentucky on March 21, 1906. He moved to Tennessee early in life. In 1834, he came to Texas, settling near La Grange in Lafayette County. He promptly volunteered for the War of Independence and served as first lieutenant, Company F, of Burleson's Regiment of Volunteers at the battle of San Jacinto. After the war he returned home and engaged in the saw mill and lumber business. His first wife died in 1837, and in 1839 he married Louise M. Smith.

On March 5, 1842, General Vasquez invaded San Antonio. Again on September 11, 1842, General Woll unexpectedly raided the town. He captured many prominent men who were attending District Court and carried them as prisoners to Mexico City. President Houston decided to retaliate by invading Mexico and capturing Mexican citizens to exchange for the Texans.

General Alexander Somerville was placed in command of the expedition and his army reached the Rio Grande River on October 19. Here, for some reason which was never



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satisfactorily explained, orders were issued by John Hemphill, acting Adjutant General, for the troops to march to Gonzales and be disbanded. About three hundred men decided to disregard instructions and continue the march into Mexico. William G. Fisher was elected commander and companies were organized under Captain Eastland, Captain Cameron, Captain Ryon and Captain Pierson. Soon after their advance was begun, a fierce battle was fought at the border town of Mier, Mexico. The Texans, being greatly outnumbered, were forced to surrender on December 26, 1842.

They were started on a march to Mexico City where they were to be imprisoned, and by February had reached the Hacienda of Salado. Here they overpowered their guards and escaped to the mountains where many of them died of thirst and starvation. Only four made their way back to Texas. The others were eventually re-captured and returned to Salado where orders were received from General Santa Anna to execute every tenth man. One hundred and fifty-nine white beans and seventeen black ones were placed in an earthen jar and each man was forced to draw one from it. It was understood that those drawing black beans would be shot. Captain Eastland was the first to thus receive his death sentence.

On March 25, 1843, the seventeen condemned men were led into the courtyard, blindfolded, and shot from the back. Their bodies were buried in a single trench.

During the war between the United States and Mexico, Major (afterwards General) Walter P. Lane, on a scouting expedition to San Luis Potosí, made a detour to Salado and the remains of these gallant men were exhumed. Brought under escort to La Grange, they were placed in a brick vault on a hill overlooking the Colorado River and the city. Their last resting place is now known as Monument Hill.

The county contains 909 square miles, and is approximately on longitude 98 West and latitude 31 North. Its altitude ranges from 1421 feet at Eastland to 1429 at Ranger; 1435 at Gorman and 1608 at Cisco. These are not the highest or lowest points but approximate them. As a means of comparison with other parts of the state the altitude of a few other towns and cities are given: Houston, from 50 to 70 feet; Waco, 427 feet; Abilene, 1720 feet; San Angelo, 1847 feet;

## BACKGROUND OF EASTLAND COUNTY

Fredericksburg, 1742 feet; Rock Springs, 2450 feet; Lubbock, 3241 feet; and Amarillo, 3676 feet.

It is interesting to note that while the general slope of the surface of the county is towards the southeast, on the borders its drainage is in all directions: the Northwest to the northwest through the Sandy creeks and the tributaries of Battle Creek; The Southwest part to the southwest through the tributaries of the Colorado; The Northeast part to the northeast through Palo Pinto Creek and the Southeast part to the southeast through Hog Creek and the Leon River. To change the story a bit, the surface of the county is somewhat like a house with a hipped roof, the water running in all directions.

About twenty-five square miles in the Southwest is drained by the tributaries of the Colorado. About one hundred square miles in the Northwest is drained by Battle Creek, Sandy Creek and the Gonzales. About fifty square miles in the Northeast part of the county is drained by the Palo Pinto and its tributaries, and about seven hundred twenty-five square miles are drained by the Leon River and its tributaries. All of these waters finally reach the Brazos except the small portion which slips into the Colorado from the Southwest.

The county is well supplied with timber of many varieties. The Post Oak is found wherever the soil is inclined to be sandy and predominant in the county. Bur Oak is found on the Leon River at Mansker's Lake and probably from that point to where the river crosses the county line.

Shin Oak probably takes its name from its small size, rarely reaching a height of more than fifteen feet, and is found, generally, on rough breaks near the water courses.

A modified post oak covers most of the sandier soils and is sometimes called shin oak but is a different species.

The pecan is abundant on the larger water courses and is a source of considerable revenue through the sale of its nuts which are produced with reasonable regularity and abundance. Pecan orchards, on a good type of sandy soil, have been found to be profitable. A considerable number are located in the Southern part of the county.

Walnut and Ash, in a limited quantity, are also found along the water courses.

Cedar is found principally on the rough limestone forma-

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tions. It is a comparatively recent inhabitant of this part of the country, but is rapidly increasing its coverage.

Lumber sawed from cotton-wood, post oak, elm and bur oak timber was used in the earlier days to a limited extent; but with the coming of the railroads, making pine lumber more easily obtained, this practice was discontinued. Saw mills were operated at Allen's Mill, Mansker's Lake, Eastland and probably at other locations in the county. Some of the early lumber is still to be found in the county — sound as a dollar and so hard that a nail gets bashful when coming in contact with it.

Of the smaller growths to be found are the black and red haw, sometimes called the May Apple and Hawthorne, and sumac. Prickly pear and cactus of many varieties are abundant in some localities, seeming to prefer limestone and alkaline types of soil. No soil is too poor to sustain them.

The soil of Eastland County ranges from the heavy clays to the deep sands, the clays being the most fertile when the time-length of cultivation is considered.

### First Inhabitants

*"Of all the beasts he learned the language,  
Learned their names and all their secrets,  
Talked with them whene'er he met them,  
Called them Hiawatha's brothers."*

Some have thought that the Indian was in North America during the glacial period; others that the Asiatics and the Indians are of the same basic stock, coming across the Bering Strait on the ice or in boats, and probably most students of the subject accept this idea.

Accepting this theory, after reaching this continent they gradually, through the ages, worked their way South along the Pacific Coast, and spread to all parts of North and South America. There is little doubt that many came this way and that centuries passed before their descendants completed the populating of the two continents.

The American Indian is usually thought of as being of Mongolian stock, most Asiatics being given that classification. It is said that there still remains in central Asia a number of isolated tribes, in the almost inaccessible fastnesses



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of its Western part, that have not been modified by contact with civilization or other races and which bear so close a resemblance to the American Indian that their being congenital is generally accepted by students of the matter.

The Norsemen who visited this continent in 1001 described the American Indian as being "Ferocious, Swarthy, with ugly hair, big eyes and broad cheeks; clad in skin clothing and armed with bows and arrows and using stone axes." This with modifications due to the effect of climate and environment would hold good to the time of known history in our own section of the country.

Ethnologists estimate that the population of North America, north of Mexico, at the time of its discovery by Columbus, was almost 1,150,000 distributed as follows: 846,000 within the present limits of the United States; 220,000 in Canada; 72,000 in Alaska; and 10,000 in Greenland. The greatest concentration of population was in the Southwestern part of California. There are probably four times as many people in Texas today as occupied this part of North America at the time of its discovery by Columbus. South of the Rio Grande is not considered in this estimate.

The Indian was a student of nature and acquainted with its whims. His calendar was composed of five seasons. The swelling of the buds in the Spring was a reminder to him that it was time to plant his corn. The maturing of his corn, that Summer ("High Sun") had come and that it was time to pitch his tent near the cool waters. Leaf falling meant that a camp should be sought near a plentiful supply of wood and where protection could be had from the elements. He knew that the frolicsome action of wild life sometimes meant that a norther was near at hand and that the severity of the winter was forecast by the thickness of the fur on the inhabitants of the forest. Nature was his crystal ball to be studied to forecast coming events.

The Indian lived on game, fish, wild fruits and some grain and vegetables, in this area mostly corn and melons. There were perhaps animals, now extinct, that fell prey to their crude stone weapons such as we find in many places in this county at the present time.

The Indian developed our Indian Corn, the Irish potato and other vegetables. Wild rice, which grew in marshy regions of the country also contributed to their food supply. In

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many parts of the region occupied by them, nuts formed a considerable part of their menu at certain seasons of the year. They also ate many animals and reptiles which were not considered suitable food by the white man.

When at war, the Indian sometimes used poison arrows. They would take the heads of rattlesnakes and boil them them. Holding the arrow-heads over the steam coated them with the poison. This made a wound from an arrow very dangerous, even if not near a vital spot.

Shields were made of the hide of the buffalo where these were obtainable, preferably that part covering the head and neck of an old bull, stretched over a hoop while green. This was worn from the neck and always turned towards the enemy. These shields were very effective against arrows and would sometimes stop the bullets of that era.

The Comanches, though raiding this part of the state more than any other tribe, never made it their home. They lived on the waters of the upper Brazos, Colorado, Pease, and the prairie dog fork of the Red River. They did most of their raiding through central Texas after being placed on the United States Government Reservation at Fort Sill.

The first known contact with the white man by the Comanches was when Coronado, in search of gold and great cities in 1540, crossed that part of Texas in 1685. In the history of that expedition the following statement may be noted: "They, the Comanches have no bread or any kind of grain, as they say, which I counted as a great matter." In speaking of their eating of meats it says, "They seethe not the flesh for the lack of pots, but roast it, more properly to say, warm it at a fire and holding the flesh in their teeth, they cut the flesh with razors of stone."

Among the early Indians, personal ownership was not recognized. The hunting party sought food for the entire camp. Caste was almost unknown and prestige was determined by ability to hunt, fish and to make war.

Leadership was not usually passed from father to son but was earned by ability in the council house and on the battle field. He was a natural gambler and would risk all that he possessed on a game of chance.

The Indian was somewhat given to the scalping of his slain foe but the early English and French settlers of Eastern North America did much to make the practice common by



## BACKGROUND OF EASTLAND COUNTY

paying them for scalps taken from white foes in the early colonial wars.

The Indian seldom placed guards or watches at night and were sometimes taken at a disadvantage by being attacked at that time by their enemies. This was true when Sitting Bull and his followers were attacked and their power to make war was practically destroyed in an Indian-White war in the latter part of the last century.

It seems to have been a general custom of the Indians to make prisoners of small children and to adopt them into their tribes as equal members of it. Observers seem to agree that such captives speedily assumed the habits and characteristics of their captors and became in all respects as faithful and patriotic as they would have been with their own people.

With the coming of the white man, diseases brought by him, measles and small pox, almost destroyed many of the Indian tribes in some parts of the United States, since they knew nothing of the methods for combating these diseases. The white man's "fire water" also did much to destroy the Indian's health and morale.

Students of the matter have stated that there were about thirty tribes occupying the territory now known as Texas at the time of its discovery by the Spaniards and French.

### **The Buffalo**

Eastland County was, in general, too broken and heavily timbered to attract the buffalo, but a few were seen as far east as McGough Springs. The Northwest part of the county was a part of their regular grazing ground. In the late seventies, the slaughter of this great animal for its hide and hump had reached its peak. The principal outfitting center for West Texas was Fort Griffin in Shackelford County.

The following is a description of the conditions at that time by Don H. Biggers as seen and experienced by him. The account is taken from an article written for a Colorado, Texas, newspaper some years ago, and is here used with his permission.

The buffaloes were migratory, drifting as far south as the Rio Grande in the winter and as far north as the Dominion

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of Canada in the summer. The southward movement would begin about September 1st and the one to the north about March 1st. By July only a few, mostly old bulls and cows, would remain south of the Canadian River. It was this drifting which, doubtless, accounts for what long puzzled the old range men — there being more buffalo per section on the range than there ever has been of cattle, yet the grass, in buffalo times, was always abundant and hay could nearly always be cut on the prairie where today cattle have to rustle for a few morsels of food. The buffaloes simply handled the range more intelligently than man has since done.

While the great bulk of them were feeding on their northern range during the late summer, the grass was growing on their winter ranges in the South and thus they had excellent pasturage at all seasons of the year as a general condition.

The number of these animals in a herd varied from a few hundred to many thousands. There were frequently so many herds in proximity that they readily appeared to be one.

An old buffalo hunter told me that he had once stood on an elevation and counted as many as half a dozen herds within a few hundred yards of each other. Some were grazing, others lying down, except here and there a standing sentinel, and others marching along with military precision, but all of these herds were headed in the same direction. The old bulls were called "stubb horns" by the Indians.

The death blow to the power of the Indian was the destruction of the buffalo which was virtually completed in 1876. The writer remembers very distinctly the great wagon trains coming from the buffalo range loaded with hides and choice cuts from the animals which had been slaughtered for such comparatively small parts of them.

A newspaper clipping of the time thus states the importance of the buffalo to the Indians: "The Comanche Indian in Texas used the buffalo in the following manner: The meat for food; brains and liver for softening leather; horns and skulls for ladles and vessels; shoulder blades for hoes, picks and knives; tendons for bow strings; tail hair for ropes and belts; and the hides for bridles, saddles, shields, moccasins, bags, shirts, beds, robes, etc.

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### First Settlers

*They were good, they were bad,  
They were weak, they were strong,  
They were wise, they were foolish,  
They were such as you and I.*

During the centuries before the coming of the white man, the Indian had beaten out trails along the water courses or from spring to spring in those parts of the country where the water courses were usually dry. These trails, for the most part, missed Eastland County and followed the Trinity and Brazos rivers to the East and the Colorado and the Conchos to the West, as these rivers carried much farther to the North and West than did the Leon. When the white explorer came into the country, it was but natural that he follow the way marked out by the Indian rather than the shorter and less known one following the Leon. So few, if any, passed through Eastland County.

There seems to be no authentic record of who was the first, other than the Indian, to set foot on the soil of Eastland County. "Big Foot" Wallace might have been the man, but the evidence is somewhat against it. In 1837 he joined a surveying party which was bound for what is now Palo Pinto County to locate lands. This party crossed the Leon River at the mouth of Armstrong Creek, about three miles east of the present town of DeLeon, and proceeded up that water course, probably to its head; thence down East Palo Pinto Creek to its junction with the north prong at what is now Strawn. The party pitched camp, and Wallace decided to make a hunt for fresh meat. He was cut off from his party by the Indians and was not able to contact them again. After many difficulties and hardships, he made his way back to Austin. During this time he may or may not have traversed some part of Eastland County.

The first white people who came to the county followed trails made by the Indians and wild animals which led to and by the watering places. After they had become more or less familiar with the country, they began to mark out trails of their own between places of interest and service to them. In this way Frank Sanches, the first white settler in Eastland County, outlined the first known trail in it. One end was at



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the log cabin overlooking Jim Neal Creek about one mile north of where it empties into the Leon River. From this location the trail crossed that small water course near his cabin, passed Davidson Spring and Rattlesnake Mountain and into Erath County at the Peter Davidson Ranch, now Tanner. This trail was largely followed in Eastland County by the Stephenville and Fort Griffin road in later years. The Fort Griffin road was probably the most widely known of any passing through the county and was largely used by the United States Government contractors who furnished the supplies for troops stationed at Fort Griffin and other West Texas posts.

The early roads were usually laid out along the lines of least resistance, taking into consideration the general direction of the objective to be reached. The country was not nearly so covered with brush then as now but the roads usually followed the glades and draws to avoid the cutting of timber and the digging down of banks. Natural crossings were sought on the water courses.

### Indian Troubles

When William Allen came to Palo Pinto County in 1856 he found the Indians numerous and comparatively friendly. However, about the time of his settling in Eastland County in 1858, they became very hostile and remained so until their power was destroyed in the middle seventies by the campaign of General McKenzie and others.

In December of 1860, Joe Smith and Golston Flannigan left Flannigan's Ranch at what is now Merriman to go to Blair's Fort for provisions.

They were in a wagon to which was hitched a yoke of young steers and had proceeded down the road about one mile when they drove into an ambush and were fired on by the Indians. The young steers reversed their course and started on a wild run through the timber but young Flannigan was hit and mortally wounded, falling from the wagon.

The steers broke their yoke when the wagon hubbed a tree and continued their wild flight. It was then that Joe Smith leaped from the wagon and ran into the timber where he waited for Golston, thinking that he, like himself, might be hiding. Failing to find him, Smith returned to the ranch

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where he reported the incident to "Bad" Reese. Smith and Reese took horses and went in search of Flannigan, finding him dead and scalped. His body was brought to the ranch and buried on a little knoll in the field east of the road just south of the bridge spanning Colony Creek at Merriman where his ashes still rest.

When an arrow which struck Joe Smith was jerked from the wound at the time he was shot, he supposed that the head came with the shaft, but some twenty-five years later he felt a sharp pain on the under side of his knee and was surprised to find a sharp black point sticking through the skin. In about three weeks it came from the flesh, seemingly not much altered in its long lodgment in Mr. Smith's knee. Mr. Smith thought that he had been shot with a double headed arrow and that only one had been removed at the time of the incident.

Sometime after the foregoing event, a Mr. Cofer lived on the J. L. Duffer place, about three miles from Mansker's Lake, on the Leon River. He was suffering from a fever and was confined to his bed, so the performing of the chores fell to his wife. The family had a nice young mare which they had staked near the house to prevent her from being stolen by the Indians. The grass becoming short, Mrs. Cofer decided to take her farther from the house during the day and to return her at night. From one of these trips, she had not returned when a neighbor came to sit up with the sick man. Upon going to search for her, they found her dead and scalped.

Mrs. Cofer was buried on a gravel knoll which afterwards became Alameda Cemetery. This long before had been the site of an Indian camp, evidence of which is still visible.

Many years afterwards an old man came to the home of the late Joe Jones, seeking for some one who could show him the grave of his wife. Much time had elapsed and many unmarked graves were there; but through the efforts and memory of Mr. Jones and the late W. C. McGough, Mr. Cofer was satisfied as to her last resting place.

## Eastland County's Minute Men

Early in the war of secession, since the Confederate Government would not provide sufficient forces for frontier de-



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fense, the State Legislature passed an act authorizing each of the thirty-seven frontier counties to organize a company of "Minute Men," not to exceed forty. The men received pay while in actual service. Practically all of the counties were quick to institute the organizations. These forces furnished the major portion of the frontier defense during the war, especially in this part of West Texas.

Under the authority of this act, in April 1863, a company was organized and mustered in at Mansker's Lake composed of the able-bodied men of Eastland, Shackelford, and Callahan counties, together with four men from Comanche County. These, with others enlisted later, formed a body of forty men. As first organized, the company was made up of Sing Gilbert, Captain; J. B. McGough, First Lieutenant; N. H. Kuykendall, Second Lieutenant; J. L. Head, Sergeant and the following Privates: W. N. Arthur, Thomas Mansker, James Stubblefield, J. B. Smith, John Temples, John Ward, C. C. Blair, J. M. Ellison, S. C. Shirley, W. C. McGough, Joe Henshaw, Gabriel Keith, B. M. Keith, G. B. Ely, Tom Gilbert, James Gilbert, Jasper Gilbert, Taylor Gilbert, Joseph Dudley, William Fisher, J. J. Keith and J. M. York.

W. C. McGough, a member of the company, had this to say as to the conditions at the time. "We had many hard things on us at this time. We had no money, and nothing to buy if we had the money. Nash Springs was our headquarters, right out in the brush at a spring with no shelter whatever."

The company was divided into four squads or scouts, each serving for a period of ten days, when it would be relieved by the next in order. It was then off for a period of thirty days unless called in case of an emergency.

### The Ellison Springs Indian Fight

George B. Ely, in "History of Pioneer Days" by John A. Hart and others, gives the following account of the episode as related to him by his cousin, T. E. Keith, a former official of Eastland County.

On the eighth day of August, 1864, this scout of seven men started out under James L. Head, corporal. We went West to McGough Springs and camped for the night. On the

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9th. we started West intending to follow the Leon River to its head, not more than twenty miles, but we only got five or six miles when we discovered the trail of a large band of Indians coming down towards the settlements. This trail was discovered near where The Texas Central Railroad crosses the Leon Valley, seven miles East of Cisco.

The little band of men, poorly armed, took up the trail of forty or more Indians and followed it southeast to a place near where the town of Jewel now stands. Overtaking them, we immediately engaged in battle, but the Indians proved to be ready for a fight. Corporal Head soon ordered a retreat to Gilbert's Ranches, three miles away.

About two-thirds of the Indians were on foot, the balance riding broken down Indian ponies which they expected to exchange for "White Man's" horses. Well, our little band of men scattered to the two Gilbert Ranches, which were one and one half miles apart, for recruits.

Captain Sing Gilbert lived at the lower Ranch. They all got their guns and mounted and met at the upper ranch for a further run and fight and they got it. There were then twelve men with Captain Gilbert in command. They went back to where the fight had occurred, took up the trail and followed it twelve or fifteen miles to what is known as Ellison Springs. Here they overtook the Indians for the second time that day, twelve men against forty or more Indians and two-thirds of them afoot. Captain Gilbert then and there, without any formation of his men, ordered a charge and led it to within thirty feet of the Indians on foot, halted and fired, then ordered his men back. Well, he paid for his indiscretion with his life. An arrow struck him in the neck on the turn, and in about an hour he bled to death. Button Keith's horse fell and he was killed on the spot. Tom Gilbert, Tom Cadenhead and Jim Ellison were all severely wounded, so there was nothing else for them to do except run for their lives to Ellison's house, three hundred yards away.

Five men out of twelve were killed or disabled — pretty severe fighting. If any Indians were killed, they were carried off by companions, as was their custom.

To show the endurance of those Indians, suppose that this fight occurred about four o'clock p. m. They had already traveled thirty-five or forty miles that day and had two fights. After that the Indians went to near Stephenville in Erath County, thirty-five or forty miles, and stole fifty or sixty head of horses before daylight next morning.

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Our two fallen "braves" were buried at Stephenville, thirty-five miles away, the nearest burying place.

This disastrous defeat illustrates in part what the frontiersmen of Texas had to contend with. They had poor arms — the muzzle-loading rifle, a few old style cap and ball Colt's pistols and home-made single-barrel pistols. These were usually made from an old rifle barrel by local gunsmiths and converted into very fair pistols, reliable for one shot.

Then, too, the powder they used was all home-made, since they were cut off by the war blockade from commerce and much-needed supplies. This powder would kill, but was not reliable. The boys called it "Slow Push powder." Their gun caps were also home-made, of lead and very hard to explode.

The last person to be killed by the Indians in Eastland County was Henry Martin, a son-in-law of W. H. Mansker, in 1871. A squad of cowhands left Mansker's Ranch for a hunt in the Davidson or Mansker Spring community (It is known by both names today) about five miles northeast of Mansker's Lake. They were attacked by a band of Indians. In the melee, the horse of Martin fell, leaving him at the mercy of the foe. A stone mound once marked the spot of his death but has now disappeared. This event occurred about two miles east of the Cheaney School House, as it stood some years ago.

Another fight between the whites and Indians in which there were no known casualties occurred near the Cisco townsite, probably in its southern suburbs. The names of the whites engaged in this fight were W. C. McGough, C. Brashers, L. B. Brittain, T. A. Bearden, N. H. Edwards, John Hill, Albert Henning, John Beal, George Keith, Jerome McLester; also three men whose names could not be obtained.

In this fight, Henning was wounded; and it is believed that an Indian was killed. The finding of a grave, supposed to be that of an Indian, not far from the scene of the fight many years later, lends credence to this belief.

After the close of the War Between the States, the company of Minute Men was disbanded, there being no authority for its continuance. But the need for protection was by no means over. At the time of the organization of the com-



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pany in 1860, a line, which ran by Flannigan's Ranch, McGough Springs, and the Gilbert Ranches on Curry Comb Creek and the Sabano, marked the Western limit of settlements in Eastland County. In 1870 the line had not materially changed.

### A One-Night Lodger

Mr. Love and his wife were sitting in their one-room log house one night when an Indian came to the door and asked permission to spend the night with them. The couple did not relish the idea but offered the Indian their only bed which he refused, asking to be allowed to sleep on the floor. Soon after the couple had retired, the Indian broke into a hearty laugh and his hosts were puzzled as to its meaning.

The couple did not sleep any that night and the Indian left early the next morning. When Mr. Love went into the yard the next morning he found moccasin tracks all around the house, so he believed that the Indian's laugh was a signal to his companions that he had received hospitable treatment.

The foregoing story was related to the writer by John Norton, now a resident of Eastland, who lived on Sandy Creek soon after the Indians ceased to raid in this section. He was a neighbor of the Love family.

We occasionally find an article in a newspaper, written by some one who came to the county in the late seventies, who speaks of the dangers to which they were exposed from the Indians raiding through the country. These stories have no foundation in fact. Mischievous white men sometimes reported the Indians as raiding in the country just for the effect that it would have on the newcomers, but the late raids are well known and accounted for both as to time and place. None are known to have occurred later than the one last mentioned.

In comparison with some other counties in this part of Texas, Eastland County came off very lightly. Parker County had more than forty killings at the hands of the Indians as compared with five known to have been killed by them in Eastland County.

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### **The Texas Rangers**

The Texas Rangers do not appear to have played an important part in the history of Eastland County. This organization, as we know it, was not created until 1874, and the Indians had ceased their raids into and through Eastland County by that time.

After the Indian came the law-breaking white man in many parts of the State, but Eastland County was fortunate in having a class of citizens which gave little trouble other than that which one would expect in a new country. Sheriff Schmick, Constable Charles C. High, and other peace officers and law-abiding citizens, were able to maintain law and order to the extent that the Rangers were not needed.

There was a camp at one time near the city of Ranger which was possibly used by them at irregular intervals. However, other than participating in the fight when the Texas and Pacific train was robbed at Ranger in the early eighties, assisting in the trailing and capture of the bandits who robbed the bank at Cisco, and a few other cases of less importance, the Rangers have had little to do in this county before or since its organization.

There is a tradition that a battle was fought in the canyon north of Ranger between the Texas Rangers and the Indians, but the writer has been unable to find mention of such an event in any history of Texas or in the reminiscences of any individual.

The last fight between the Rangers and the Indians in this part of the country was near Coleman in 1874 between a band of Comanches and a squad of Texas Rangers under the command of Captain Maltby. Two Indians were killed, one wounded and captured.

### **Life in the Early Days**

An interesting description of the conditions in Eastland County in the early days was given by Mrs. Henry Duvall in a Ranger paper some time ago. The writer would give the proper credit, but for the fact that the clipping which he has bears neither date or origin. The following is, in part, the letter.



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"For a few years the settlers had to go to Stephenville for their mail and supplies, but about 1876 Judge Scott, who now resides in Cisco, put in a few groceries and a post office which was located on the hill East of Mansker's Lake. Prior to 1872 the settlers had to go to Stephenville when they needed a doctor. Dr. Thaddeus William May was the only doctor in the vicinity for some time after that time. C. E. May of Ranger is one of his sons.

"March 10, 1872 Dr. Jackson Evans located at the present site of Eastland. These two doctors, May and Evans, covered as much territory as the old circuit riders. Doctors and circuit riders were men of the highest courage, undaunted by Indians, facing with calm determination, heat and cold and long night rides. These doctors loved their trusty, surefooted horses and their guns. Medical supplies and a few instruments were carried in their saddle bag."

Mrs. Duvall recalls that on September 21, 1874, the grasshoppers came over in such numbers that it seemed like a cloud was over the sun. Also, that about the middle of June, 1875, a freak of nature took place — a heavy freeze came with a north wind, killing corn which was then waist high. But to these hardy souls, the trials were but a part of the vicissitudes of life. The pioneers were contented and happy, enjoying to full measure any pleasure that came their way.

At this time Eastland County was a paradise for hunters. Cougars, bears and turkeys were abundant, also smaller game. Wild berries and grapes were plentiful, and there were bee trees full of honey. Drought, hail or grasshoppers could not entirely wipe out their food supply.

Typical of one of the pioneer settlers of Eastland County was William Pike Tindall, who came to Eastland in 1885. Although he was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in 1818, he went to Texas at the age of 18. January, 1836, it was, as stated in Headright Certificate No. 115. This was issued to Mr. Tindall for one-third of a league of land by the Board of Land Commissioners for Matagorda County on January 9, 1838.

Tindall enlisted in the army of Texas January 15, 1836. At Velasco on February 1, 1836, he voted in the election to select delegates to the Constitutional Convention, held at Washington-on-the-Brazos March 1. He participated in the Battle of San Jacinto, and was made a sergeant on June 25.

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He is listed on the official San Jacinto rolls printed in 1836 as *Tindall* (given names or initials not shown), a member of Captain Henry Teal's Company of Regulars. Mr. Tindall's name appears on the army rolls in the General Land Office, as a member of Company A, First Regiment of Infantry, on June 30, 1836. Later, August 31, 1836, he was shown as Fourth Sergeant of Captain Teal's Company, but as being on detached service at Linn's Warehouse at that time.

Shortly after the Battle of San Jacinto, Tindall returned to Alabama and remained there for a few years. He then moved to Pontotoc, Mississippi, where he made his home until after the Civil War.

During 1854-58 Tindall was County Judge of Pontotoc County, Mississippi. He was also District Clerk of the county for four years. Judge Tindall was married to Virginia Barksdale. They had five children: Lewis, William Pike, Richard, Hugh and Lucy.

On September 30, 1859, Tindall received Comptroller's Certificate No. 45 for 640 acres of land. This was for having served in the Texas Army. In 1838 he had been issued a donation certificate for 640 acres because of his participation in the Battle of San Jacinto. This was lost, but a duplicate was issued to him on August 30, 1876. Tindall was always an active member of the Texas Veterans Association.

In 1873 Judge Tindall moved back to Texas where his two sons, Lewis and Richard, had already settled. Although he first located in Hamilton County, he moved to Eastland County in 1885 where he made his home with his son, Lewis. This son served Eastland County as deputy sheriff in 1881-1882. Lewis Tindall was always known as a strong, energetic and resourceful man in his private business and exemplified a commendable public spirit in all of his civic activities.

William Tindall crossed the Great Divide on November 25, 1901, and was buried in the cemetery at Eastland.

## The Homes of the Early Settlers

*"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."*

Picture a rough trail, the nearest approach to a road to be found, along which, with slow and measured tread, moves a yoke of oxen hitched to a wooden axle wagon, loaded with

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the scanty possessions of the prospective settler. The mother and perhaps a small child or two are riding in the wagon, the father and older children walking ahead and behind. From one to half a dozen dogs trot contentedly nearby or under the wagon. Perhaps a cow or two are being led behind the wagon or are being driven by the children. The family had left one of the older settled states to seek a home in Texas, where land is cheap or to be had for the asking, and game is plentiful; where fences are not necessary for stock raising and such as are needed for limited agriculture can be built from the resources at hand.

As no wells had been dug at this time, they seek a spring or a lasting water hole in a creek near which to settle. The site was usually chosen after consultation with those who had come before them and who were more or less familiar with the land survey lines. The location of the house having been decided upon, a temporary camp was pitched and the older members of the family repaired to the woods in search of timber suitable for house logs. When a sufficient number had been cut, they were dragged to the house site, if the distance were not too great, or hauled on the wagon if from a distance. Then preparations were made for the house raising. All of the neighbors were invited and a dinner of bread, beef, coffee and maybe some extras were provided. When the men had assembled, each was given a special duty to perform. Some carried up the corners, others raised the logs to the corner men, and some performed minor chores.

First the foundation logs were put in place and underpinned. Then a man was assigned to each corner who proceeded to cut a saddle on the end of the log, and another was laid on and notched to fit. This was continued until the wall was as high as was intended. Then the tops of the two logs upon which the rafters were to be placed were smoothed on the top sides, and the rafters put in place. The lathes, small poles, flattened somewhat, were then laid across the rafters and fastened with pegs. The house was then ready for its roof, which was made of boards about four feet long from the straightest oak timber available, laid on a shingle fashion, held in place by weight poles on each side of the comb and fastened together to keep them from slipping. This usually completed the work of the "raisers" although they were sometimes dismissed when the walls were

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completed. The settler proceeded to make the doors, either from split logs or from boards similar to those in the roof and windows where the logs had been sawed out and the opening closed with board shutters. In the earlier days, the floors, in the majority of cases, were mother earth.

Chimneys, in Eastland County, were usually of stone but a few were of the stick and mud variety, made of poles plastered over with mud made of clay. The fireplace was made of or lined with stone.

The furniture of the early settler was usually homemade and very simple. The bedsteads were usually of two patterns. One type was made by boring an auger hole in both sides and walls of the log house sufficiently distant from the corners to make the bed size desired. These holes were reamed large enough to take the prepared ends of the poles that would hold up the weight of the occupants of the bed. An inside corner post was then set and these side poles fastened to it. Cow hides were then cut in strips, thoroughly soaked and woven into the frame thus made. This, when the strips had dried, made a very satisfactory foundation for the bedding.

The other type was made of four posts, two sides and end pieces, with the bottom woven in as in the foregoing description.

In addition to these was the trundle bed sometimes found in homes. During the day it was carefully pushed back under the bedstead used by father and mother, but after candle lighting it was pulled out. As the smaller children became sleepy, they were deposited in its bosom until there were sometimes four or five embarked on their trip to slumber land. The writer has often wished that he could sleep in an old trundle bed one more time.

Chairs were almost unknown. Some had brought a few with them from "back home." In the main, benches of near kin to the battle bench, supplemented by stools with or without legs, made of blocks sawed from the bodies of trees, were in use.

When wash day came 'round, the women of the house gathered the clothes and put them to soak. After this, they were transferred to a large iron pot for boiling. From the pot they were moved on to the battling bench where they were soundly pounded with a paddle. This bench, usually made



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from a section of sapling, was about six feet long and flattened to a comparatively smooth surface. Stout legs raised it to a convenient height. The paddle resembled a stout home-made boat oar. From the battling bench, the clothes were put into the rinsing tub (often the half of a barrel); then to the yard fence or convenient shrubs to dry. The tubs required regular attention to keep them from falling to staves.

The soap used was made from drip lye from the ash hopper into which had been placed the ashes from the chimney and other sources and upon which water had been regularly poured. The sipe, the lye, was gathered and stored until such time as the lady of the house was ready to make her soap.

The old-time flat iron has never entirely gone out of use and needs no description in this article.

The cooking vessels were neither numerous nor complicated. They consisted, for the most part of a dutch oven, a three-legged skillet, an iron pot, a tea kettle of the same material, a shovel, and pot hooks. Also in common use was an iron bar, turned up at the end, which was suspended before the fireplace. Pots were hung upon it in which food was prepared when boiling was necessary. Although the frontiersman's cooking equipment would now be considered crude, the food prepared with it would satisfy the taste of an epicure.

The clothing of the men and larger boys was usually made of "jeans" woven by the feminine members of the family. Later this was as common on the merchant's shelves as is the cotton duck of today. The writer will never forget an overcoat made of this material which was his when a very young lad. He wore it until it was outgrown, passed it on to the next in line, and by him to the next. It was never worn out, just laid aside.

My ladies' outer clothing was sometimes made of "linsey-woolsey," sometimes of cotton cloth and occasionally of linen. As much as ten to twelve yards was often used to make her Sunday dress. The reader can imagine the time used, the trouble taken in its preparation and the care with which it was handled.

Shoes for the family were sometimes made by one of its members; but often there was a neighbor, maybe miles

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away, who excelled in this line of work and did most of the shoe-making for the neighborhood.

As the settlers began to come into a little money and stocks of merchandise became more general in amount and variety carried, they began to substitute "store bought" clothes for the homespun ones. Home weaving rapidly declined.

For light, the big log fire in the chimney was mainly depended upon in the winter-time. Grease lamps were also used, often being cups containing most any kind of grease or oil with a piece of thick cloth for a wick. Later, when coal oil became available, the little brass lamp without a chimney was the family stand-by. They may still occasionally be seen, kept as souvenirs.

When the family went visiting, to church or to any other gathering, the old wooden axle wagon was called into service — unless the number going was small, in which case the trip was usually made horseback. The men's saddles of that time were made with broad, flat horns. These came in very handy when small children were to be taken: one could be seated and held on the horn as well as one behind the saddle.

The women's saddles were known as side saddles and probably need no description. Perhaps all of my readers have seen specimens kept as relics from other days, occasionally used in parades depicting olden times. They were hard on the horses' withers and backs. Few which were regularly ridden with them escaped scars and grey hairs. Some women attained wonderful skill in riding on them. To the unpracticed, though, the feat resembled in some particulars the walking of a tight rope. Keeping your balance was very essential.

One of the exciting times of the writer's courting days occurred on a trip to a singing convention in company with a young lady. We were on horseback, she riding on a side saddle and wearing a strong denim riding skirt. Just as we were starting down the bank of a ravine, the horse which she was riding stumbled to his knee. The young lady, fearing that the horse would fall, undertook to get out of the saddle, but her riding skirt caught on one of the horns. This threw her head first to the ground and hurt her painfully. This

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was one of my early dates, and to say that I was very much disturbed would be putting it very mildly. Some of the old timers who attended singings at the old Elm Creek School House in the 1890's may remember the occurrence.

## CHAPTER II

# THE COUNTY ORGANIZED

## The County Court

When Silas Buck, a young lawyer, came to live in the home of Peter Davidson in 1872, he decided that the time had come when Eastland County should be organized.

Mr. Buck himself had been appointed Deputy County Clerk of Palo Pinto County, to which Eastland County was attached for judicial purposes, and proceeded to circulate a petition. This was to be presented to the Presiding Officer of the Police Court of Palo Pinto County, asking that an election be held in Eastland County for the purpose of organizing it. The law required that seventy-five names be on the petition, but when Mr. Buck had secured sixty-five it was presented to the Court. The Court ordered that such an election be held.

Preparing for the election the Court established the following precincts in Eastland County. "Be it remembered that on the eleventh day of November, A.D. 1873 there came on to be held a called term of The Honorable Police Court of Palo Pinto County. Present and presiding, J. H. Baker, J. P., Precinct Number One; C. L. Carter, J. P., Precinct Number Five; W. H. Cowden, J. P., Precinct Number Three, J. H. Caruthers, Sheriff, and Wm. Metcalf, Clerk. The following precincts were laid off preparatory to the organization of the County of Eastland.

### PRECINCT NUMBER ONE

Commencing at the North-East Corner of the Northwest League, McLennan County School Land, thence West to the County Line of Callahan County; Thence South with said line to the line of the A. T. Burnley Survey; Thence East with said line of section nineteen, Central Railroad Survey; Thence East to the East line of section 19, Central R. R. Survey; Thence North to the place of beginning.



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### PRECINCT NUMBER TWO

Beginning at the North-East corner of the N. W. League, McLennan County School Land; Thence West to the County Line of Callahan County; Thence West to the North-West Corner of Eastland County; Thence East, with the North line of Eastland County, to the West line of the Sam Smith Survey; Thence South to the North line of the Van Norman Survey; Thence West and North with the North line of the Van Norman and the East line of the McLennan County School Land to the place of beginning.

### PRECINCT NUMBER THREE

Commencing at West line of the Samuel Smith survey, thence South to the North line of the Van Norman Survey thence East to the West line of the D. Butler Survey, Thence South to the North line of the Richardson Survey, Thence East to the line of Palo Pinto County, Thence North to the North-East corner of Eastland County, Thence West to the place of beginning.

### PRECINCT NUMBER FOUR

Commencing at the North-East corner of the N. W. League of the McLennan County School Land, Thence South to the Comanche County line; Thence North to the North East Corner of Precinct Number Three; Thence with the South Line of Precinct Number three to the place of beginning.

### PRECINCT NUMBER FIVE

Commencing at the South-East corner of Precinct Number One; Thence West to the line of Callahan County; Thence South with said line to the South-West corner of Eastland County; Thence East and North with the line of said county to the South West corner of Precinct Number Four; Thence North to the place of beginning.

It is further ordered by the Court that the following named persons be appointed managers to hold said election in their respective precincts, to wit; Precinct Number one, William McGough at McGough's Ranch; Precinct Number Two; J. M. Crisman at Wilcox's; Precinct Number Three,

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J. P. Davidson at Allens Mill; Precinct Number Four, I. P. Schmick at Schmick's School House; Precinct Number Five, Thomas Marsh at Marsh's House.

The State of Texas	)	
	)	
County of Eastland	)	I, William Metcalf, Clerk C. C. P. P. Co.,

The Election was held December 2, 1873 and J. B. McGough was elected Justice of Precinct Number One; W. F. Hale, of Precinct Number Two; John W. Gibson, of Precinct Number Three; J. W. Watson of Precinct Number Four; and E. E. Head of Precinct Number Five.

### Some Orders of the County Court

Order Number Two; Commissioner's Court, November 27th, 1876: "That J. H. Calhoun, County Judge, negotiate for and procure for a jail, the log house on the Northeast corner of the square of the town of Eastland." This building was then moved to about where the back part of The Lyric Theater is now located.

Order Number Eighteen, same term: "That J. H. Neal's account of \$4.00 be allowed for guarding prisoners and hauling sawdust for the court house floor." It is not known what house this was as the stone building on the corner of the square had not been built.

At the August Term 1887, of the Commissioner's Court this order was passed: "That the Tax Assessor erase from the rolls of property, where unlawfully raised by the said Board of Equalization and that the values accepted by said assessor be substituted therefor on said rolls." This sounds strange to the present day taxpayer. The values set by the Board of Equalization are accepted as the lawful valuation.

The late W. C. Bedford, in a conversation with the writer, stated that upon coming to town one day he met Sheriff Schmick and asked him what he had done with a number of men which were suspected of being cow thieves, whom he had rounded up a few days before. The sheriff replied, "Come and see." Mr. Bedford went with him to the jail where he was shown the prisoners, each chained separately

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to a log in the wall of the house. The cracks were large and plentiful enough so that it was no trouble to get the chains around the logs. A guard was also employed.

The first building owned by the county and used by it for a jail was a log house located on the northeast corner of the square. This building was authorized to be bought for that purpose by an order of the Commissioner's Court dated October 1st, 1876.

Sessions of the various courts were ordered to be held in the "Stone Building" (The present Corner Drug Store location) by an order of the Commissioner's Court dated July 1st, 1876.

The late C. U. Connellee is authority for the statement that, at the time of the selection of Eastland as the county seat, there was no road leading to it, but that a number of citizens got together and cut out a road to Mansker's Lake.

The first road to be ordered opened by the court, after the county site was moved to Eastland, was to be from Eastland to Mansker's Lake, thence to Winona (a post office in Erath County about one mile east of the present town of Desdemona). The route ordered by the Justices changed the one opened by the citizens some time before, moving it from the valley of the Leon to the uplands.

The second order was that a road be laid out from Eastland to intersect the Fort Griffin and Stephenville road, northwest of Eastland, to make it the most practical one to Fort Griffin. The route of this old road may still be followed by the deeply-washed gullies in parts of it.

Another order which illustrates the latitude given those viewing the road locations is one as follows, "To lay out a road to the Eastland County line towards Comanche."

Early Salaries; By order of the County Clerk, as then known, A. J. Stuart was allowed the sum of one hundred dollars on September 27, 1875, "For Each years work as Clerk Of The District Court and that he issued warrants on the Treasurer for the same." (There was no County Court at the time.)

An article which appeared in *The Texas Gazette*, published at Austin, Texas, November 17, 1855, states that "During the latter part of September and the fore part of this month the grasshoppers have infested the upper country; in many places entirely destroying the fall vegetables. Their

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coming was like a dense snow storm, looking towards the sun. The atmosphere seemed to be thick with them."

In this part of the country, about 1880, a cloud of hoppers came over in numbers sufficient to dim the sunlight. The atmosphere seemed thick with them; settling to the earth, they almost covered it. They only remained a few days, however, before resuming their southward journey. There were other migrations of more or less magnitude, which did but little damage. The writer has a very definite recollection of the 1880 flight.

The species making these treks were very different from the ones which dealt so much trouble in later years to the farmers whose fields were in the prairie or mesquite country. These were referred to as coming from Kansas.

It is noticeable that the population increased much more rapidly after the county seat was located at Eastland. The arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad at Fort Worth in 1876, plus the general opinion that it would soon be extended on into the West, prompted homeseekers to come to the counties through which they thought that the railroad would be built.

### **The Populist Party in Eastland County**

Before 1892 there were no primary elections in Eastland County. Any one who desired to do so announced his candidacy for the office of his choice. All ran through to the November election when the candidate receiving a majority or plurality of the votes cast and counted was declared to have been elected.

In 1892 the Populist Party placed a ticket in the field for all county and precinct offices and, as a matter of protection, the Democratic Party did the same. In that year both the Democratic and Populist tickets were selected at conventions. There was some dissatisfaction as to the manner in which the Democratic nominations were made. In the general election the Populist nominee for Sheriff was elected and the balance of their ticket was defeated.

In 1894 the Populist party elected its nominees for treasurer, M. A. Wood; for sheriff, Sam P. Finley; for County Clerk, Jules A. Karkalita; and T. E. Keith, the "Red Roan



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From Turkey Creek," as Commissioner from Precinct Number Three.

In 1896 their luck was not so good: they only elected Mr. Keith. 1898 was their banner year when they elected J. L. Noble, Sheriff; S. A. Bryant, Tax Collector; M. A. Wood, Treasurer; G. W. Daken, County Judge; J. R. Frost, Representative; W. D. Stirman, Commissioner, Precinct Number Two; and A. Taylor, Commissioner, Precinct Number Three.

The tide turned strongly in 1900. Only Sheriff Noble, and S. A. Bryant who switched from the race for Tax Collector to that of County Judge, were elected.

This marked the end of Populist office holding in Eastland County and the party soon disintegrated.

During this period the primary election had its inception in the seeming need for a plan by which party candidates might be selected. The necessity, if it ever existed, has long since passed. It seems destined to continue, however, to be the election at which our officials (precinct, county and district) will be elected; and the general election continue to be the farcical affair which serves no good purpose insofar as state, county, and precinct officers are concerned.

The present set-up has the effect of working a hardship on the poor man who would run for office. Without the primary, the one election would be paid for by the different counties of the State. As it is now the candidates pay for the ones which really count, in July and August, and the counties pay for the almost meaningless one in November.

## The County Courthouse

After the organization of the county its population increased more rapidly. In 1880 it had 4,855 population. Many things had contributed to this expansion. The Indians made no raids after 1874. After the organization, the settlers seemed to have more faith in being secure from lawlessness and in their ability to obtain schooling for their children. The prospect that the Texas and Pacific Railroad would soon be extended west from Fort Worth was also a very potent factor in influencing the homeseeker to cast his lot in the county.

The first sessions of District Court in Eastland County

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were held at Schmick's School House at Alameda at a two-story log building which stood just north of the Eastland and Desdemona road and about three hundred yards east of where the road now crosses Mansker's Lake. The lower story was intended to be used for school purposes and the upper story as a meeting place for the Alameda Masonic Lodge No. 467 (which afterwards became Eastland Masonic Lodge with the same number).

The reason for holding the terms of District Court at Alameda instead of at Merriman, the county seat, given the writer by the late H. S. Schmick, who was sheriff at the time, was that the building was the only one in the county large enough to accommodate the court. Even then the Grand Jury had to hold its sessions under the nearby trees.

The next three sessions were held at Merriman in a little house which stood about one hundred yards north of the present bridge on Colony Creek. This building had been bought from L. B. Perry for the sum of four hundred dollars to be paid in Eastland County bonds of that face value. It had been built of rawhide lumber sawed in the neighborhood. Titles must have been somewhat scrambled at the time, since in 1877 the Finley heirs were paid five dollars for their interest in the building by the Commissioner's Court of Eastland County.

In 1882, this building was sold to the Merriman School Community for the sum of fifteen dollars. Afterwards it was bought from that group by a Mr. Sweet who moved it to the Joe Norton place in Olden. Part of the lumber was used in the erection of the building in which Mr. Norton now lives. It is still as sound as a silver dollar and so hard that a nail becomes bashful upon coming in contact with it.

When C. U. Connellee and his partner, J. S. Daugherty, came to Eastland County in the winter of 1874 to locate the C. S. Betts survey, which they had bought, they passed through Merriman, then the County Seat. They noticed that no apparent effort was being made to develop it. There was a small rawhide lumber building, used only as a place to hold court. The officials lived in other parts of the county, and kept the county's records at their homes. The young real estate dealers also noticed that the seat of government was some distance from the center of the county. So they con-

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ceived the idea of securing its removal to the Betts survey which was considerably nearer the center.

About two miles from the Betts survey they found a log cabin which was occupied by John S. Bedford, William Gwaltney, J. E. Gold, and J. H. Calhoun, all of whom were surveyors. Mr. Calhoun informed the young partners that he could show them the corners of the Betts survey, making the location of their property easy for them. They made a survey of the tract and a partial survey of the townsite during the Christmas week of 1874; then hired a man to build a log cabin near the back end of the present Connellee Theatre building, the first house of any kind to be erected in Eastland.

The nearest settlements to the town were the homes of Alexander Martin, about one mile to the southwest and that of Pinkney Truly, about an equal distance to the southeast of the proposed townsite.

In the latter part of 1875, the survey was completed and a proposition was made by the County Police Court, that if they would order an election to determine whether or not the County Seat would be re-located, that they would enter into a bond in the sum of five thousand dollars, to build a rock house, twenty-five by fifty feet, and to furnish the greater part of the upper story to the county for its use of holding sessions of the courts and as offices for its officials for a number of years if the County Seat were moved to Eastland. The proposition was as follows as found in the records of Eastland County:

The State Of Texas, County of Eastland; Know all men by these presents that we J. S. Daugherty and C. U. Connellee, for and in consideration that the County Site of Eastland County shall be located on the Charles Betts 320 acre survey of land, situated in Eastland County, on the North Prong of the Leon River, have granted, released and conveyed and by these presents do grant, release and convey unto the said county of Eastland, all of that tract of land situated in Eastland County, State of Texas, about eight and one half miles North, seventy one degrees West from the juncture of Colony Creek with the North Leon, being a part of survey number seventeen, and patented to Charles Betts.

Beginning at a stone for corner 1092 and one half feet N. E. from the S. W. corner of the said Betts Survey, Thence

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

South 200 feet to a stone; Thence 200 feet to a stone; Thence North 200 feet to a stone; Thence 200 feet from the beginning, together with all and singular the rights, members, hereditaments, and appurtenances to the same belonging or in anywise appertaining.

To have and to hold all and singular the premises above mentioned unto the said County of Eastland forever and we do hereby bind our Executors and Administrators to warrant and forever defend all and singular the said premises unto the said Eastland County against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof. In testimony whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals, this the eighteenth day of January A. D. 1875.

J. S. DAUGHERTY

C. U. CONNELLEE

Marked and filed for record January 18, 1875.

An election was held to determine whether or not the County Seat should be moved was ordered to be held on August 2, 1875, with the result that Eastland received 67 votes; center of the County, five votes; McGough Springs, Forty-four votes; Merriman, 9 votes and two were called scattering. As a majority of the voters of the county then lived in the Mansker Lake and Allen's Mill communities and but few in the vicinity of Eastland, the promoters must have been fine mixers and to have had a good proposition.

The terms of the District Court for approximately the next eight years were held in the upper story of the stone building on the northwest corner of the square at Eastland. By this time Connellee, Daugherty and Ammerman were anxious to get possession of this space for their own use and the building of a courthouse was considered by the Commissioner's Court. During the latter part of 1880 and the early part of 1881, the Texas and Pacific Railroad was completed through the County as was the Texas Central. The town of Cisco was established at the intersection of the two roads. Cisco's growth was very rapid for a time and the desire to become the county capital developed with its growth.

A petition was presented to the Commissioner's Court asking that an election be held for the purpose of re-locating the county seat and was ordered to be held August 2nd, 1881.



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The election was hotly contested and considerable warmth of feeling developed which it took years to dissipate. When the votes were counted it was found that Eastland had received 354 votes, Cisco, 324, Hogdimaonia, 1 vote, and the center of the County, 20 votes.

No effort was made to build a courthouse until the election of county officers in 1882. In 1883 a contract was signed by the Commissioner's Court and the firm of Lance and McEachern for the erection of a stone building, native material to be used, which was to have two stories and a garret. The contract price was \$34,998.00, but the contractors soon ran into difficulties. The building was completed under the supervision of the Court at a cost of, approximately, forty thousand dollars.

The County had the misfortune to lose this building by fire in the latter part of 1896 but, fortunately, few of the records were destroyed and a wooden building was constructed, about where the Majestic Cafe now is located, for use until a new courthouse could be erected. The offices of the various officials were scattered through the town. The thought of changing the location of the county site again having been raised, an election was ordered to be held January 21, 1897 for a decision in the matter. At this election, Cisco received 940 votes; Eastland, 553; Carbon, 355; Center, 16; and Curtis and Duster, one each.

While Cisco received more votes than any other location, it was necessary that it receive two-thirds of all votes cast to be selected, being located outside of the five mile radius from the center of the County.

So Eastland, being within the charmed circle, remained the County Seat.

When the Commissioner's Court considered the building of the new courthouse, there was a rather determined effort made to postpone the matter. The effort to do so, however, was defeated by a three to two vote, the commissioners dividing equally, and the county judge casting the deciding ballot.

In the meantime the title to the C. S. Betts Survey, upon which the building was to be situated, was questioned, but the attorneys examining the title found no grounds for this contention.

Some advocated that the insurance money from the poli-

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cies on the burned building be used to retire the indebtedness of the County. This idea was rejected, however, when an election as to whether a courthouse should be built was favorable to that proposition.

At the March term of the Commissioner's Court in 1897 it was ordered that a new jail also be built, and that the stone in the old courthouse and jail building should be used in its erection.

An order was issued May 14, 1897, that \$5,000 in Courthouse and Jail bonds be issued which, with the insurance collected on the burned building, was thought to be enough for the erection of the two structures. The contract was let for the new courthouse building at the May term of the Commissioner's Court in 1897 to J. A. White and was completed about the first of the following year. The contract price was \$49,000.

Much has been said and written about "Old Rip" the horned frog which is reputed to have been imprisoned within the cornerstone of an Eastland County Courthouse — there have been four of them — for thirty-one years. Many people have doubts as to the truth of the story. In this connection the writer will give his own observations which the reader may value as his or her judgment may dictate. A story had been circulated that a horned frog, among other things, had been desposited in the cornerstone of the courthouse at the time of its building in 1927 and which was being demolished in February of 1928 in preparation for the erection of the present building. The writer took but little interest in the story and did not intend to be present when the cornerstone was uncovered, but had strolled to the Courthouse Square and seeing the gathering went over to the location where he met Judge Cyrus B. Frost. There was a stack of window frames near the cornerstone and Mr. Frost and I climbed on them and secured a very fine view of the situation and procedure.

The cornerstone was still covered with the undisturbed section of the brick wall to a depth of three or four feet in a pyramidal shape. A tractor was near and a large chain was placed around the column and attached to the tractor. At a word from some one the tractor was put in motion and the remnant of the wall was pulled down. Men who were waiting with various tools, went to the cornerstone and under

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the supervision of Rev. F. E. Singleton, cleared the debris away. First to be removed from direct contact with the walls of the cavity in the cornerstone was a piece of galvanized iron which snugly fitted the top of the cavity and under which were some newspapers and other articles. I then saw one of the party reach down and bring to sight a horned frog which, seemingly, was dormant but after a few moments showed signs of life.

A man sitting on the ground between the cornerstone and Mr. Frost and myself got up, brushed his pants with his hands and as he passed remarked, "Well I'll be damned. If I had not seen it I would not believe it". That was about how the writer felt about it.

The frog was exhibited in many cities of the United States and made a personal appearance before President Coolidge. After its return from this trip it is said to have died of pneumonia and its embalmed body was placed in the lobby of the present Eastland County Courthouse where it is viewed by many tourists and visitors.

## Facts of Early Eastland County

In 1881 the taxable values were, as rendered,	\$ 1,677,682
In 1903 they had increased to	4,575,682
In 1913 " " " "	9,816,415
In 1920 " " " "	24,037,100
In 1924 " " " "	38,417,580

Since 1924 they have decreased as follows: in 1930, \$37,-188,070; in 1940, \$21,315,580.

The population of the county has also varied with conditions, increasing steadily until it had reached the great wave during the height of the oil boom in about 1920 and receding less rapidly since that time. The census for the different years available to the writer were as follows: 1880 — 4,855; 1890 — 10,373; 1900 — 17,911; 1910 — 23,421; 1920 — 58,505; 1930 — 34,156; 1940 — 30,406.

The census of 1930 also disclosed that of the 34,156: 32,615 were native whites, 199 were foreign-born whites, 36 were Mexicans and 701 were Negroes. It also disclosed that 16,883 lived in the towns. 17,273 lived in the rural districts, but 8,217 of those did not live on farms.

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## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

In the *Texas Almanac* for 1930, Eastland County's retail trade was given as being \$14,560,000 of which the Automotive group was the largest with \$5,450,000. The county had 561 persons who filed income tax returns that year.

A lady's name on the Eastland County marriage record is given as being Virginia Louise Eliza Swan Williams.

Another entry on the marriage record states that A. J. Stuart issued the marriage license for E. H. Smith and Matilda Hardwick as County Clerk and performed the ceremony as a minister of the Gospel. This may be an error in recording, but so says the record.

Under the constitution of 1845 no minister of the Gospel or priest of any denomination was eligible to membership in either house of the legislature.

There were eighteen banks in the county in 1920 with an assessed valuation of \$629,980.00. In 1930 this number had decreased to seven with an assessed valuation of \$414,840. By 1940 the number had decreased to five with an assessed valuation of \$18,400.

The collective deposits of the banks in 1907 was placed at over one million dollars which is probably less than that of any bank in the county at this time.

At this time there was only one bank, a private one, in the county. This was reported to have had a capital stock of \$20,000 and an accumulated surplus of \$5,000. There were reported to have been eighty-eight marriages, seven divorces and two newspapers, *The Eastland Chronicle* and *The Cisco Roundup*.

The first newspaper to be published in Eastland or Eastland County was the *Eastland Review*, established in 1876 by Major J. H. Davenport. It began its career of some six years in a frame building which stood about where the Walters Grocery is now located, at the corner of Main and Commerce streets. Like most frontier publications, its equipment consisted of an old Washington Hand Press and a few cases of type. There was not much about which the frontier editor could write, but he made good use of such as came his way. The weekly paper was looked for with as much interest as are the dailies of today.

When The Texas and Pacific Railroad started building west from Fort Worth it was news stock for several years, and later the number of people served by the newspapers had



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increased until the publications were fairly well planted for more extended usefulness.

The *Review* continued to be published until about 1882, the last year by Frank B. Stanley. He afterwards moved to Fort Worth, where he was a successful lawyer for many years.

About the time of the demise of the *Review*, J. T. Hammons, who had served as County Judge of the County, began the publication of the *Eastland Anchor*. It was published for some years before being discontinued.

The *Eastland Chronicle* was established by June Kimble in 1887. It has been in continuous publication since that time, by Captain Kimble, until he became Deputy County Clerk in 1900. Captain Kimble called his paper *The Chronicle* in memory of his home town paper at Clarksville, Tennessee, which was so named.

The following statistics are from the second annual report of the Department of Agriculture, Insurance, Statistics and History for the State of Texas, of date 1888-1889:

### EASTLAND COUNTY

Total Value of Property.....	\$2,344,468
Value of Improved Lands.....	\$3 to \$8 per acre
Value of Unimproved Lands.....	\$2 to \$8 per acre
Average Taxable Value of All Lands.....	\$1.86 per acre

## CHAPTER III

# OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

## Early Cattle

Our early Texas cattle were largely descendants of those brought to Mexico from Spain by Cortez and his successors. Some were the offspring of those brought from England, Holland and France by the colonists who settled the Eastern States. The first were of the rather gaunt, rangy type; the other of the more compact type and also much more gentle.

Among the early introductions of cattle from other states was that of Captain Abner Kuykendall who, it is said, brought a few head with him to Texas from Arkansas in 1822. The foundation stock for other herds east of the Brazos was from Louisiana and other nearby states. The herds west of the Brazos were developed, for the most part, from foundation stock from Mexico.

The first reliable market for cattle in Texas was the establishment by James Porter of a line of boats from Indianola, at the mouth of the Brazos, to New Orleans. Full-grown steers at this time are said to have brought ten dollars per head. As grass was free, however, and usually plentiful, it cost but little to produce them. Active cattle men made good money from their herds and established some of the large ranches in existence today.

During the Civil War, Texas became badly overstocked, owing to the loss of all outside markets through the blockade of its ports by Union gunboats. This over-stocked condition continued to exist for some years after the close of the war.

After the close of the Civil War, packing houses were established at Indianola, Victoria, Fulton, and Goliad. Little success was had by these enterprises, probably on account of inadequate distribution facilities. Driving to northern markets before the coming of the railroads; after their coming, to railroad terminals for shipment to Kansas City and Chi-

## OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

cago, was the usual practice until the establishment of packing houses at Fort Worth in 1902-1903 by the Swifts and Armours. Some independent packing houses were established about this time in different parts of the State.

In 1873 cattle brought only what could be had for the hides, horns, hoofs and tallow. The flesh was thrown away. This low price was caused by a great financial depression and by badly overstocked ranges.

In 1882 range cattle sold for as high as \$90.00 per head. It was freely predicted that this price, or a higher one, was here to stay, just as some prophets had argued that the high price of all property in 1929 would hold indefinitely. In 1886, though, the bottom also fell out. Prices reached a very low level and remained there for several years.

The cattle industry has been discussed as a unit thus far, since the same conditions existed in Eastland County as in other parts of the State and nation.

Among the early cattlemen ranching in Eastland County were the Gilbert boys, Schmick, and Cage on Sabano and Curry Comb creeks; W. M. Allen on the Palo Pinto; John Flannigan on the Colony; W. H. Mansker at the lake of that name; W. C. McGough at McGough Springs; and John T. Townsend and the Smith brothers on the Leon, west of Eastland. These all came to the county before 1800.

Early attempts to improve the cattle of Eastland County were very discouraging. Well-bred cattle brought in from the North and East seldom survived the first summer. This was thought to be on account of acclimation fever, but Dr. Francis of the A. & M. College Veterinary Department found it to be from a fever caused by the bite of the ordinary cattle tick. He found it could be controlled by the dipping of all the cattle in an arsenical solution, then watching for further infestation. This practice enabled the stockman to clear the ranges of the tick pest and to bring in improved breeds without the danger of serious loss. At the present time, most of the cattle of the county are well graded, either as dairy or beef types, and numerous herds of fine pure-bred animals have been established.

An early leader in this effort to develop a better class of cattle was C. U. Connellee. In the 1880's, he brought in good specimens of both beef and dairy breeds. He suffered much from tick fever losses.

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

A competent authority estimates that the number of Hereford breeders in Eastland County at this time was more than one hundred. It is probable, however, that a large percentage of them did not keep their stock registered.

It was but natural that the number of cattle would decrease in the county as it became more thickly settled and more land was put under the plow.

The census of 1888 showed 27,822 cattle, valued at \$170,304 or about seven dollars per head. In 1889, there were 35,512, with a valuation of \$222,112 or about six dollars per head. In 1910, the number had dropped to 14,540, valued at \$147,180, approximately eleven dollars per head. In 1925 the tax rolls showed 18,120 cattle valued at \$380,000, approximately twenty-one dollars per head; and in 1930 the same source showed 20,174, valued at \$270,174 or about thirteen dollars per head. From the foregoing figures, it would seem that the number of cattle in the county has been gradually increasing for some years, so it is likely that the saturation point has about been reached.

Dairy cattle from the county have won ribbons at the Texas State Fair at Dallas; the Fat Stock Show at Fort Worth; the East Texas Fair at Marshall; the Central West Texas Fair at Abilene, and other places.

One of the principal powers behind this movement for better dairy cattle is the boys' Future Farmers of America organization, the members of which have been foremost in the displays at the different fairs.

The importance of the dairy cow to the farmers of Eastland County can hardly be overestimated. The great majority of the farms cannot support many livestock, and the dairy cow can produce more in the way of the necessities of life for the farm family (and a little pin money on the side) than any other farm animal.

## Goats, Sheep, and Hogs

In the early settlement of Eastland County there were a few Spanish goats, usually being run with the sheep. The first angora goats to be brought into the county were owned by Kounce and Son who at that time ranched on the south side of the Leon River at a spring about one mile south of the power plant, on what is now known as the Massengale



## OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

place. There was then no market in this part of the country for the fleece of the goat. As the angora had no advantages over the common goat for any other purpose, the herd gradually declined and the Kounce flock disappeared.

It was not until comparatively recent times that the angora breed has assumed an important role in the production of mohair. There are now many high grade flocks in the county. The income from the sale of the fleece is not the only advantage in the keeping of goats. Their value in cleaning up pastures and keeping down much of the undergrowth is well recognized.

Wolves, formerly a serious handicap to the raising of goats and sheep, have been practically eliminated in the county. The prowling dog still remains and continues to be a considerable handicap, however.

Goats and cattle work well together, so many ranchers are building woven wire fences in order that better use of the land may be had by grazing both.

The early hogs of the county remind the writer of a story which he heard the late S. C. Bond tell, and which he thinks will bear repeating. An East Texas "Colonel," the owner of a large plantation, came regularly to the Dallas Fair and visited the swine pens. The owners of the hogs on exhibition regularly insisted on selling the "Colonel" some improved swine to go to his plantation. They were always met with the statement that he had better hogs than they. The exhibitors urged him to bring some of his superior hogs to the fair and place them on exhibition. This the colonel promised to do at the next meeting. According to his promise he had some shipped to the fair grounds and placed in the swine pens. Then he went to find his friends.

When they approached the pens where the hogs were impounded, the colonel purposely dropped back as the interested friends hastened up to see the new breed. Upon their approaching the pens, the inmates began to snap their teeth and try to climb the fence—the friends making a prompt getaway. Meeting the colonel one of them exclaimed, "Colonel, you don't call those things good hogs do you?" To which he replied in the affirmative. When asked to name their good qualities he replied, "Speed, sir, speed. In my country a hog that can't outrun a Negro ain't worth a damn." The primitive Eastland County hogs had all the good points

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

of the Colonel's. They would fight anything that roamed the woods.

Any settler having a marked hog in the woods had a claim and the privilege of killing any fat, unmarked hog that he could find. Some had defective eyes when it came to seeing trimmed ears. The hog hunter had but little luck without the help of trained dogs but sometimes "Still Hunting" was rewarded. A dog without training was worth but little and stood a splendid chance to feel the touch of the sharp tusks of the older boars and stags.

In 1877 W. C. McGough had a large number of hogs, but, there being no mast that fall on account of a killing frost on the night of June 9th of that year, they were very poor. "Uncle Bill," a very resourceful individual, rounded them up. With the help of J. H. Westbrook, his father-in-law, he then drove them to the "Cow House Creek" community in Bell County, where he bought a "Pile" of corn and fed them. When the weather had become cool and the hogs fat, he drove them back to Eastland County. Those which became exhausted, and unable to continue the trip under their own power, were killed and salted down in the boxes of the wagon.

After reaching home, Mr. McGough sent word through the country that any one who would help in the killing and dressing of the hogs could buy what he wanted at three and one half cents per pound "On the pole." People from miles around took advantage of the offer with the result that all parts of the program were carried on at the same time. Some were killing, some were scalding and scraping, some were cutting up the meat, and some frying out the lard from the trimmings — as busy a gathering as you would care to see.

This was especially helpful to the people of the neighborhood: they had raised no feed with which to fatten their hogs and those on the range were too poor for slaughter. Meat freighted in from the North would have been more expensive than their thin pocketbooks could pay for.

C. E. Lafoon, who has lived in the county continuously since that time and is now a citizen of the town of Eastland, witnessed this circumstance. He is the authority for the story.

With the coming of the wire fence and the necessity for the confinement of swine, improved breeds came into more

## OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

general production. In the early eighties, Charles C. High brought a pair of Jersey Reds, the forerunner of the Duroc-Jerseys, to the county. This breed grew to be very large. Its flesh was coarse, but the breed had a large influence on local hog development. Berkshires and Poland Chinas were also brought in; by 1910, Eastland County had become an important center for those breeds.

Since the cotton crop has become almost a thing of the past on account of boll-weevil infestation, the production of hogs has gained in importance, ranking high as a producer of county income. This is especially true since the coming of improved roads and the automotive pick-up which enables the small producer to market less than carload lots. A "Razor Back" would now be a fit occupant for a cage in a side-show of a circus.

The first record of the number of sheep in Eastland County coming to the notice of the writer is found in the report of The Texas Agricultural Bureau for 1888, which gave it as being 8,436. In 1891, according to the same authority, the number had dropped to 455, valued at \$1.60 per head. This number was not increased perceptibly until 1930 when 749 were reported on the tax roll. The number had increased to 1,050 in 1940.

With the extermination of the coyote and the control of the sheep-killing dog it would seem that this section of the livestock industry should continue to grow.

## Early Horses

The first settlers of the county found some mustang horses in this section of the country but they, like the buffalo, liked the open country better. W. C. McGough, in his memoirs, stated that he had roped several on Sandy Creek.

In the early days, horses were valued principally for their speed and endurance, together with a reasonable amount of intelligence — their ability to catch up with a cow or to outrun an Indian. They were either of the Spanish type or of what are now known as "Short Horses."

Among the leading strains of short horses were the Steel Dust, Morgan, and Copper Bottom. All of these had more or less thoroughbred blood in their veins, and received their names from some exceptional sire.



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The Steel-Dust strain was the most popular in Eastland County and was developed there to some extent. A horse named Steel, foaled in Illinois, the property of a man by the name of Green, was taken to California and was kept there for a while. Then he was brought to Dallas County, Texas, where he was bought by Shelby Stanfield and brought to Parker County. When Mr. Stanfield moved to Eastland County about 1880, he brought the horse with him and he was kept there until his death by old age. He was blind in his older days and was known as Blind Steel to the horsemen of this territory.

In 1887, Dr. J. Brelsford, a citizen of the state of Illinois, brought three well-bred stallions into the county which, with others coming in later, were destined to change the type of horses used in the county. One was a percheron, and the cross with the native mares proved so popular as work stock that this type rapidly took first rank in the production of horses in Eastland County.

His standard bred horse caught the fancy of those desiring good driving stock and others of that type were brought in. The third, a thoroughbred, was taken to Sipe Springs in Comanche County, but had little influence on the equine population of Eastland County.

The day of the extensive use of the horse in this county seems to have passed. A few farms are still cultivated with horse-drawn implements, although those which are gasoline-propelled do most of the farm and ranch work. Also, many of the trips to town are made by the farm tractors. Some statistics as to the number of horses in Eastland County follows:

In 1878 there were 7,251 on the tax rolls and the value given was \$187,746, an average of slightly more than \$23.00 per head.

In 1889, 8,184 were on the tax rolls and were valued at \$196,968, an average of \$24 per head. In 1891 there were 9,576 recorded, valued at \$22.00 per head. By 1920 the number had increased to 12,610 and a valuation of \$990,140. Since that time the number has steadily decreased, there being only 4,280 in 1930, valued at \$128,400; and in 1940, 3,850 valued at \$97,950. The value per head has varied from \$80 in 1920 to \$20 in 1940.

The increase in 1920 is attributed to the great number used in the oil industry; the decrease since that time, to the



## OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

decline in drilling operations and the more extensive use of motorized equipment in farming and other operations. The price in 1929 was largely due to the superior quality of many of the teams used in the oil fields.

It is interesting to note the rise and fall of the number of farms in the county from 1888 (the first official figures coming to the notice of the writer) to 1940. In 1888 there were 862 reported for the county; 1300 in 1893; 1499 in 1900; 2012, the highest reported in any year, in 1925; only 1990 were reported in 1930, the first loss reported from the county.

### Early Crops

Farm wages for 1888 were given by The Texas Agricultural Bulletin as being an average of \$13.26 per month including board, lodging and laundering of clothes. Around the year 1900 and for some years thereafter, the wage was \$15.00 per month with board, etc. With the coming of the oil development, hired farm labor almost ceased to exist in this county and is still of small volume.

The first available data showing the progress of Eastland County along agricultural lines coming to the attention of the writer is from a copy of the aforementioned bulletin which states that Eastland County had 10,635 acres planted to cotton in 1888, and that the production was 3,346 bales which sold for ten cents per pound bringing the farmers of the county \$172,300. The following year, according to the same authority, 15,049 bales were produced, sold for eleven cents per pound, bringing \$369,050.

The largest number of bales ever produced in the county in one year was in 1908. Production reached 53,931 bales which, at an average price of  $9\frac{3}{4}$  cents per pound, returned \$2,600,000 — the largest sum ever received from a crop of any kind. A close runner-up was the one of 1925 when the price per pound lacked but little of being double that of the earlier year. There have been eight years in which the value of the cotton crop exceeded one million dollars: 1906, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1919, 1923, 1924, and 1925. The amount of cotton produced during these years was not so great, but the price was extraordinarily high.

Since 1930, both quantity and price have been small. The

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crop has added but little to the county income. Circumstances and conditions may change but it would seem that, owing to the continuance of the ravages of the boll weevil and the planting of the sandier soils in peanuts, the production of cotton will be limited, perhaps never again approaching its former magnitude.

For those who wonder why so many of the old-time credit merchants went broke, some contrasting figures as to production might be of interest. The 53,931 bale crop of 1908 was followed by one of 29,977 in 1909, but a raise of price of three cents per pound helped to relieve the situation. The \$2,583,130 crop of 1925 was followed by one which brought \$335,050. This fall is accounted for by the almost total destruction of the crop by the boll weevil and the fall in price of lint cotton from eighteen cents to ten cents per pound. Some other years were almost as bad. Variations of other crops were almost as great and the credit merchant was at the mercy of these variations.

The value of cottonseed for any purpose, other than for planting, was somewhat slow to be realized. Before 1890 it was difficult for the gin man to persuade the farmer to remove the seed from the gin yard and many thousands of bushels were destroyed to get them out of the way.

It is interesting to note that the Technological School at Lubbock is making a study of the different varieties of castor beans at the present time. One objection to them when tried in this county was the disposition of the seed pods to burst and scatter the seed over the ground, making harvesting difficult.

## The A. & M. Extension Service in Eastland County

The teachings of the Extension Service are based on long and careful study of these various problems. They would, if practised, do much to improve conditions, but the battle has been long and difficult. Much is yet to be done if the county is to regain its former standing as an agricultural center.

Mr. Sanderford served the County as Agricultural Agent for two years and was the first to organize boys' corn and cotton clubs in the county. He was followed by the author who emphasized soil building and conservation and the

## OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

feeding of livestock, returning the waste from the feed pen to the land, as one of the means to that end.

The writer ran the first terrace lines in the county by any County Agent. He devoted much time to the advocacy of this practice as a means of controlling erosion, the foe of all rolling farm lands. Many of those for whom lines were run failed to realize that much work was necessary to build the terraces strong enough to hold the pressure of the water from heavy rains. So they abandoned the task when the light ridges which they had thrown up went out. Now the necessity for terraces and their efficiency in preserving the soil as well as in holding the water for the future use of the crops has been more widely recognized. Much work of this character is now being done, although many fields are still depositing their fertility into the water courses — each row carrying its own water and soil, to a low place when all join to produce a useless ditch.

Some few short terraces had been run prior to this time, usually using a common spirit level to lay out the lines. Most of these were of small value, except where very short, owing to the difficulty of getting the proper fall for them. Some of the terraces laid off by the writer are still giving good service after more than twenty-five years.

By 1914 the boll weevil had become so numerous that the raising of cotton was a precarious business and it seemed that the farmer would have to find some other line of agricultural endeavor. It had already been proved that the small Spanish Peanut would produce well on the sandier soils but the market for them was not of sufficient volume to absorb a large additional production. Hogs had always grown in the county when given proper attention, and the idea was advanced to combine the production of hogs and peanuts, permitting the hogs to harvest the nuts, returning everything to the soil. The idea seemed practical. Many farms were devoted to the new enterprise until the packers began to cut the price of peanut hogs and finally almost refused to buy them at all, giving as the reason the softness of the fat and its tendency to drip. During this time, the Extension Service did much to assist the farmer by the introduction of self-feeders for hogs which were not being grazed.

With the coming of the oil boom the writer sought more remunerative service and it was not until 1923 that the next



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agent, R. H. Bush, was employed for work in the county.

The later County Agents, beginning with Mr. Bush, have been men with better training and much better backing by Federal, State and County Agencies than were their predecessors. As could be expected, they have attained better results, although the pioneers in any worthwhile enterprise are not without their influence and accomplishments.

Eastland County started its campaign to rebuild its farming industry (effectually disrupted by the boom brought on by the discovery of oil within its boundaries) in 1923, when County Agent Bush entered upon his first year of service. Agent Bush organized 4-H Boys' Clubs with a sizable membership. A tri-county encampment, made up of boys from Comanche, Eastland and Stephens counties, was held at Eastland June 14, 15 and 16, 1924. It was attended by five hundred club members. In 1924, 4-H boys attended the annual Farmer's Short Course at College Station; also four County Camps were held, attended by 4-H girls, boys and their parents.

In 1926 a combination convention of the Eastland County Federation of Boys' and Girls' Clubs was held at Randolph College at Cisco with the active co-operation of the Rotarians, Lions and Chambers of Commerce in the County.

Here the club members practiced judging of livestock and agricultural products in contests, preparing for the meeting of the farmer's short course at College Station.

On April 23, 1927, J. C. Patterson became County Agent and Miss Ruth Ramey, Home Demonstration Agent, continuing the work of the 4-H Clubs.

In 1927, at the suggestion of County Agent Patterson, the Commissioner's Court of Eastland County made the offer that any farmer in Eastland County who desired to terrace his farm might have the use of the road graders of the county by paying for the gas consumed in the operation. Many farmers took advantage of this opportunity and a large number of terraces were constructed.

The benefits were large to those who gave them intelligent care, but some seemed to think that the terraces were permanent and needed no further care. To these they have been of little benefit. About 4,500 acres are said to have been terraced in the county under this arrangement but many hundreds of acres are still in need of this treatment.



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Mr. Patterson was succeeded by C. Metz Heald in 1935 and in the following year Hugh Barnhart was appointed Assistant County Agent with 4-H Club work as his special assignment.

Mr. Heald was succeeded by Elmo V. Cook March 1, 1936, and devoted his time principally to adult work. Under his leadership, with the assistance of Mr. Barnhart, the 4-H Clubs became more active. They enrolled a total of 236 members in 1936. Ten registered Jersey heifers were bought by members of the clubs; also, a number of registered hogs.

In 1937 the dairy demonstration team from Eastland County was winner in a state-wide contest. The members were awarded a trip to the National Dairy Show at Columbus, Ohio, with all expenses paid. Also in that year two Eastland County boys were awarded Gold Star Pins after being selected among the one hundred best 4-H Club boys in Texas. This performance was repeated in 1938.

Hugh Barnhart, Assistant County Agent, deserves a great deal of credit for the development of 4-H Club work in the county as it was under his direct supervision.

In 1941 three hundred and thirty boys and two hundred and eighty-three girls were enrolled in 4-H Club work. It is difficult to estimate the value to the county of the accomplishments of these clubs.

"Great oaks from little acorns grow," and there is no doubt that the work done by the members of these organizations is sound and practical. If Eastland County is to ever become a prosperous agricultural and stock-raising center, it will be through the application of the basic principles taught by these agencies.

It is interesting to note that of the fifty-seven outstanding agents in the United States in 1940, as reported by United States agricultural authorities, eight were from Texas. Five of the eight were from West Texas; and Elmo Cook, at that time County Agent for Eastland County, and J. C. Patterson, a former agent for the county but at that time serving in McLennan County in the same capacity, were among the five. The agent for Eastland County in 1944 was Floyd Lynch, a transfer from Jones County. Mr. Lynch has continued along the line of his immediate predecessors in pressing the importance of terracing and the building of the soil, also of boys' club work — the training of the members

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upon whom the future of agriculture in Eastland County largely depends.

Another accomplishment of the co-operative work in Eastland County is the creation of the game refuge in the northeastern part of the county. This project is known as the Tudor Game Preserve. The organization is made up of twenty-two land owners whose combined acreage amounts to more than forty thousand acres of broken, brushy land. But little of it is in cultivation. The area is comparatively well watered. Some deer were already in the territory. To these, the Fish and Oyster Commission added 104 which, if given proper protection, should stock that part of the county. This is probably the only community in the county where such a project could be worked out, except, perhaps, the northwest part of the county which is held in large tracts and already contains some deer. However, it is not protected so well by natural barriers. Agent Lynch is to be commended for this progressive achievement.

## Petroleum

The first production of petroleum in Texas of great importance was developed near Corsicana in 1896. The discovery was made while drilling a deep well in search of an adequate water supply for the city. Following this find, the Powell Pool was developed to important production.

In 1901, the Spindle Top field was developed in East Texas and other pools in the same general area were discovered to place Texas among the states producing petroleum in important quantities.

In 1904, oil was discovered at Petrolia in Clay County, causing considerable excitement in that part of the state. It may be that, encouraged by these discoveries, it was oil that Henry Lightfoot was searching for when he moved a rotary rig on his farm east of Eastland and drilled for several months to an unknown (to the public) depth. No information as to the depth attained or the formations penetrated was given the public. The secret of whether any shows of oil or gas were encountered was well kept. Soon after ceasing work on this proposition, Mr. Lightfoot sold his landed property in Eastland County and moved to another part of the state.

## OCCUPATIONS OF EASTLAND COUNTY

Some years before gas and oil was found in marketable quantities in this part of the state, "Uncle Jimmy" Daniels drilled a shallow well about eight miles northwest of Eastland which produced some gas which was used by him for fuel and lighting purposes.

It is probable that the first effort to find oil in Eastland County which had a reasonable chance of success, was made by The Central Texas Oil Company (an organization of local Rising Star people) in 1909. Its drilling is said to have been inspired by the finding of oil at Petrolia in Clay County and the large production at Spindle Top and adjacent fields. This well was drilled to the Caddo Lime, had a nice show of oil, but never made a producer.

In 1912 The Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company drilled numerous wells to a shallow depth with rotary tools in the North and East parts of the county. It is not known by other than members of the company, perhaps, for what they were prospecting. A small amount of gas was found about seven miles east of Eastland and a farm was bought by the company upon which some of these shallow wells were drilled. They made no attempt to develop this farm, however, until after the strike at Ranger, when a small producer was completed on it in the Ranger pay horizon.

The Texas Company took some leases in the Northwest part of the county as early as 1911, but did no drilling in this county until after the discovery of oil at Ranger. They had a producing well at Parks Ranch in Stephens County, however, prior to this time. The real lease play in Eastland County may be said to have had its beginning in 1913 when Herbert Land took leases on a number of tracts in the vicinity of what afterwards was known as Lee-Ray.

On November 9, 1913, there was completed the first well to produce oil in paying quantity in Middle and West Texas. It was about one mile west of Moran, in Shackelford County. This was the Texas Company's J. E. Wild Number One-A. The well was drilled with a make-shift wooden derrick and cable tools which had been brought from Pennsylvania. They were more than nine months in drilling it. The well had twenty feet of pay sand and produced around seventy-five barrels of oil per day for a time. The oil was transported from the well to a railroad siding near Moran in tanks mounted on wagons. It was plugged after about eight years



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of production. The drilling of the well is commemorated by a miniature derrick and bronze plaque on the lawn of the Court House at Albany.

This was the beginning of the first important search for oil in the great area between Corsicana and El Paso. Shortly after the finding of oil at Moran, The Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company developed a shallow field of fair producers near Strawn in Palo Pinto County. These, no doubt, also increased the interest in finding and producing oil in Eastland County.

The Canfield Oil Company became interested in leasing in Eastland County the latter part of 1914 and the early part of 1915. In the latter year they drilled a well on the Brelsford Farm, about one mile northwest of the town of Eastland, to a depth of about 1600 feet — where it is said that a small amount of gas was encountered. The idea at the time seems to have been to explore the horizon of the sand then producing at Strawn and Moran.

In 1915 the lease play in Eastland County increased very materially. W. H. Heydrick took leases for The Texas Company in the South-central part of the county, and The Producers Oil Company, R. F. Gilman and Henry Livingston took some tracts in the North part. Others in the play were Elmer Hupp, The J. M. Guffey Petroleum Company, and The Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company. Still others took scattering leases, sometimes as agents for other parties.

The first well in Eastland County to produce oil or gas in commercial quantity was The Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company's Nannie Walker No. One, situated within the Ranger townsite. This well encountered a show of gas estimated at ten million cubic feet per day at a depth of about 3200 feet. As there was no market for the gas at that time, no use of it was made. The well was considered a disappointment until it blew into oil production some weeks later.

When the Company's McCleskey No. One reached the sand horizon, it also found gas, but in less volume. The boiler was moved back for safety and drilling was resumed. It continued until October 28, 1917, when oil was found, which (when the flow was at its peak) reached a daily production of more than seventeen hundred barrels. This amount, exceeded by many later wells in the field, was sufficient to set off the fireworks and Ranger experienced



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what was probably the most spectacular boom ever to have occurred within the United States.

Development radiated from this well to cover a large part of the county and no part of it but what has had some prospecting.

The next center of excitement and activity was Desdemona, which was given a flying start by the bringing in of the Duke well by R. O. Harvey in early 1918. This well had an estimated flush production of 10,000 barrels per day. So activity increased in this area very materially. By 1919 the Desdemona field was probably the second largest, in the matter of production, in the oil belt.

The Rising Star-Pioneer section also has had large production, extending into Callahan and Brown counties.

The peak of production in Eastland County is said to have been reached in June of 1919, when 75,933 barrels per day were reported to have been received by the Humble, Gulf, Magnolia, United Producers, and other pipe lines.

In order to better understand the magnitude of the oil production of Eastland County, it is necessary to examine some definite figures.

The demand was great and the price ranged from three to four dollars per barrel, including premiums. This meant that in Eastland County alone approximately seventy million dollars was produced in 1919, and it must be remembered that Eastland County was only a portion of the field. It will also be noted that production rose and declined rapidly.

Eastland County production is reported as follows:

YEAR	BARRELS	YEAR	BARRELS
1917 -----	a few thousand	1921 -----	5,887,420
1918 -----	3,107,120	1922 -----	4,787,315
1919 -----	22,297,665	1923 -----	3,764,095
1920 -----	10,141,358	1924 -----	2,238,840

Production has continued to decline at about the same ratio to the present time. In 1932 it was 1,203 barrels per day.\*

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\* The Texas Almanac.

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As long as drilling operations were confined to areas near the railroad towns, the question of transporting drilling equipment and supplies was not a serious one. When oil was discovered at Desdemona and other rural areas and the very heavy wet season of 1919 was on, it became a problem hard to handle. Many heavy horse teams were brought in, some of which were valued at \$600 or more per span with an almost equal amount invested in the harnesses they wore. In the Desdemona area several strings of oxen were used to drag the boiler-laden wagons through the almost-impassable Leon lowlands, but their use did not extend to any other part of the county. Tractors were also brought into action to a limited extent but never came into general use. As many as six hundred oil field wagons, loaded with equipment for drilling oil wells and material for derricks were sent out of the Gulf yards at Eastland. Probably as many were sent from the Magnolia yards at Olden, and it is probable that a greater number than these two combined were loaded out from the yards of the different companies at Ranger. Gorman, Rising Star, and Cisco, while not in the early rush, were centers from which much material was distributed.

### Oil Field Fires

The first of the oil field fires was the Hogg well at Desdemona, which occurred on the night of September 2nd, 1918. The well had passed the level at which it was generally thought that production would be found, but drilling operations were being continued — probably without much expectation of finding oil. Suddenly the derrick became a roaring furnace when the oil came pouring from the casing and almost instantly became ignited, causing a fire. Its blaze and billows of smoke could be seen for many miles. Fortunately no one was injured. The blaze was extinguished two days later.

Another fire destroyed storage tanks on the Brewer farm at Merriman and took the lives of Ike Hand, Pleas Madewell and a man whose name is unknown — all employees of The T. P. Coal and Oil Company. It created much excitement for a time.

The writer remembers being at the well before storage had been provided. Men and teams were busy preparing an

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earthen tank. The oil from the well was already flowing into it through an open ditch. There were probably one hundred or more people around the well, one of whom thoughtlessly placed a cigarette in his mouth and started to light a match when a bystander struck it from his hand. Except for the quick thinking and acting of this person, a tragedy most surely would have occurred which would have been worse than any in the oil field.

The story of the oil boom in Eastland County is too long and varied for this writer to undertake to relate in detail. He refers those who desire to enjoy its excitement and romance to "Were you in Ranger?" by that inimitable writer, Boyce House.

### Early Land Grants

People looking over a map of Eastland County wonder about the names of some of the surveys. These were derived from various conditions. Persons arriving in Texas and becoming citizens of the State (after the Declaration of Independence and before October 1st, 1837) received, if heads of families, twelve hundred acres of land; if single, 640 acres. Between October 1, 1837 and January 1, 1840, heads of families received 640 acres of land upon condition that they resided upon the same for three years. Upon the same condition, single men received 320 acres.

By an act of January 4, 1841, heads of families emigrating since January 1, 1840, were entitled to 640 acres. However, they must cultivate ten acres and have the location surveyed and marked. The last provision was repealed February 4, 1842. Single men were to receive 320 acres under the same conditions.

There were four classes of headrights, the date of their coming determining the class. Special headrights were issued to the survivors and heirs of the men who fought and fell with Ward, Fannin, Johnson, Travis, Grant, and Milam at San Antonio at the Alamo — and other encounters with the Mexicans.

The laws of the Republic also provided that "All volunteers arriving in the Republic after the date of the Declaration of Independence, and prior to August first, 1836, and who were honorably discharged or have died, if heads of



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families, are entitled to one league and labor of land and if single men, to one third of a league." There were other laws granting lands, one of which was the payment of debts with land scrip, and later, homestead rights were granted on unsurveyed school land.

In all of the foregoing cases, except that of issuing scrip to pay debts, etc., the grants were to the interested parties. The locations were made in the name of the person to whom the grant was made or his assignee.

Special grants were made to railroads which built track-age in Texas. These surveys were named for the railroads for which the grants were made. It is noticeable that although the greatest part of the land in Eastland County is in railroad surveys, each alternate section was for the school fund. Large gifts of land were made to the asylums and state schools; also to the counties for their permanent school funds. The counties were given four leagues each, to be selected by the county itself, from any un-surveyed land of the state. In this way, many of the counties acquired their lands in other parts of the state far removed from themselves. There are two counties which secured their lands in Eastland County — McLennan and Robertson.

There were individuals who acquired quite formidable fortunes by buying grants and scrip from those to whom they had been issued, then locating and filing on the land; others by locating for an interest, as was the case with Peter Davidson for Eastland County.

Most, if not all, of the school land surveys bear the name of the party or parties owning it at the time that the patent was applied for. The following list of surveys will give the reader an idea why they were granted.

Mary Ann Clark, Abstract no. 51, "As a headright, having arrived in this country in February, 1836."

George Click, Abstract No. 52, "As a headright, having arrived in Texas in the fall of 1835."

Wm. DeMoss, Abstract No. 73, "As a headright, having emigrated prior to the Declaration of Independence."

Spires Dooley, Abstract No. 77, "As a headright having arrived in this country in 1832."

Elizabeth Finley, "In accordance with an act for the relief of Elizabeth Finley, passed September 1, 1856."

James Jett, Abstract No. 333, "As a headright, having



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emigrated prior to the Declaration of Independence."

D. R. Kinchelo, Abstract No. 341, "Donation for participation in the battle of San Jacinto."

James Lanea, Abstract No. 360, "For nineteen months' service in the army of The Texas Republic."

William Van Norman, Abstract 545, "As A Headright, since he arrived in Texas subsequent to The Declaration of Independence and prior to August 1st, 1936."

John York, Abstract 557, "As a headright because of settling with his family in this country in 1825 or 1826."

William P. Tindall, "Donation by virtue of a special act of the legislature, since he participated in the battle of San Jacinto."

Harvey Kendrick, "As a headright, having emigrated to Texas in the year 1835, prior to May 2nd."

From the foregoing citations, one may have a comprehensive idea of the reasons for the granting and naming of many of the surveys in Eastland County.

## CHAPTER IV

# EDUCATION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

### Land Grants for School Purposes

On January 5, 1850, the legislature of The State of Texas passed an act making an appropriation of four leagues of land to all counties organized since February 16, 1846. Organized counties which had not received their allotment under an act of March 13, 1875 were authorized to have surveyed and located the four leagues of land to which the county was rightfully entitled. In keeping with this act, School Land Certificate Number One was issued to Eastland County by the commissioners of The General Land Office, June 28, 1875.

A contract was then entered into by the Commissioner's Court of Eastland County and Peter Davidson under the terms of which Davidson was to locate and survey the lands of Eastland County. In payment for his services, he was to receive title to one of the leagues.

On September 21, 1876, three leagues of land in Crosby County were patented to Eastland County and were known as leagues one, two and three. On October 9, 1876, one league in Floyd County was patented to Eastland County. League Number Two in Crosby County was then deeded to John Peter Davidson for his services in locating and securing the patents to them.

The permanent school fund of Eastland County was made up of its interest in the permanent school fund of the state and from the proceeds from the sale from the land granted it by the state for county school purposes. Its operating fund was derived from the interest on the investments made of the proceeds from the sale of its lands by the State of Texas for Public Free School purposes; from its share of the proceeds derived from the interest on deferred payments on school land sold by the state; from the proceeds from all leases (grass, oil, etc.); interest from the investments from the sale of royalties; and numerous state taxes.

## EDUCATION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

From 1876 to 1911, little progress had been made in bettering the country schools. In the year 1914 a law was passed (in which the writer had a part), creating a County Board of Trustees which consisted of one member from each commissioner's precinct in the county. Later one was added for the county at large. The first mention of there being a member at large was in 1916 and it is presumed that the law was changed, adding the fifth member in that year. The County Superintendent of Schools was also added as Executive Secretary without the privilege of voting on any question, and the name was changed to that of "The County School Trustees."

The duties of the board, in the main, are those formerly executed by the Commissioner's Court, but these have been enlarged and defined. In 1912 it was decided by the board that the intermediate schools where there were high school pupils not conveniently near high schools of two or more teachers, that they be permitted to pursue their studies at the schools in the district where they lived.

Two-teacher schools were rated as high schools of nine grades; four-teacher schools as high schools of ten grades; and all schools with more than four teachers as high schools of eleven grades.

In 1917, the county board appointed an attendance officer and this policy has been followed, intermittently, since that time with indifferent results. It seems that there has been no change in the law by which the board is governed or in its policies for some years.

The schools in 1927 were classified as follows:

One-teacher schools, as elementary, were only to teach the first seven grades.

Two-teacher schools, as elementary high schools, were to teach the first seven grades. In addition they were to be able to teach the eighth and had permission to teach the ninth if the enrollment were less than forty pupils.

All three-teacher schools were to teach the first seven grades and, in addition thereto, the eighth and ninth. They might teach the tenth if the enrollment were less than sixty.

All four-teacher schools were to teach the first seven grades; in addition, the first three grades of high school. Also, they were to teach the fourth year, if the enrollment were less than eighty, but the schools were limited to ten grades.

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The foregoing seems to be the approximate classification at the present time.

In 1924 there were eight independent school districts in the county: Carbon, Cisco, Desdemona, Eastland, Gorman, Pioneer, and Ranger.

With the coming of the oil boom, it became difficult for some of the Independent School Districts to provide room for the increased number of pupils and to secure the additional teachers to serve them. Both labor and material were high in price and difficult to obtain in a reasonable length of time. Competent teachers and those capable of filling such positions had no trouble in finding employment in other lines of business at better wages than the schools could pay. It became necessary to float large bond issues to finance school building programs.

When the boom subsided and the districts found themselves with approximately the same number of pupils but with greatly reduced incomes, practically all of the independent school districts in the county defaulted in the payment of principal and interest on their bonded indebtedness.

Cisco, Eastland, and Ranger were, perhaps, the hardest hit in this respect, but Rising Star, Carbon, Gorman, and Desdemona were not without their troubles. Some of the districts have had their indebtedness adjusted to where they will be able to meet their payments regularly now.

The rural schools, not generally incumbered with bonded indebtedness, were in a comparatively better condition. Some of the rural schools cut expenses by consolidation; some by transferring their pupils, under contract, to other schools; and others continued to operate as in former years.

In 1929, under the Rural High School Law, the County School Trustees began their efforts to classify the rural schools of the county. Some of the schools raised their own level while some voluntarily reduced them, depending upon the number of scholastics in the school district, the condition of their finances and other particulars in their school set-up. Under this plan fifty-five schools were grouped in fourteen centers.

In the re-grouping of the schools, the County Board met with much opposition. For some time, no county school superintendent was able to weather a campaign for a second term. This opposition seems to be dying out now, as roads



## EDUCATION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

have been generally improved and bus transportation adopted. Probably it will continue to diminish.

In 1933, during the administration of Superintendent McGlamery, many rural schools made application for state aid in accordance with the law granting such aid, in order to lengthen their terms.

Perhaps of most importance to the schools of the county has been the high level of state per capita payments. Especially is this true in the rural districts where, without this help, most of them would have been unable to carry out their schedules. These state payments have ranged from \$4.25 per capita in the early years to \$22.50 in 1940. The school age also has been lowered, providing more pupils to participate in the distribution.

Rural aid has also been of great importance to the weaker rural schools in assisting them in meeting certain requirements and in the making of special grants to enable them to secure better-trained teachers, longer terms of school, and more adequate equipment.

In 1942 the independent school districts in the county were the same as in 1924: Carbon, Cisco, Desdemona, Eastland, Gorman, Olden, Pioneer, Ranger, and Rising Star. In these schools a teacher was required to have completed a four-year college course to come into the system, or if already serving, must be working to that end.

Those schools having a high school classification and receiving aid from the state must have the same requirements as to classification of teachers as have independent districts. These schools were, in 1943: Alameda, Morton Valley, and Scranton. The remainder of the schools in the county system are classified as elementary schools, usually of seven grades. High school pupils in these districts are transferred to the most convenient high school. These elementary schools do not require that a teacher have a college degree or that they be working to that end, but must have had as much as two years of college work.

All pupils had the privilege of using books from the County School Library and are also at that time (school year of 1941-42) getting the benefits of a "School of the Air" through the use of radios provided by the school system.

A 1941 bulletin from the County Superintendent's office

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gave the following information as to the program for that year:

1. The first month of the Eastland County school session, 1941-1942, closed this week, October 3, 1941. All teachers under House Bill No. 38 to take the oath of office required of all officials.
2. School Boards have a regular meeting date at the end of each school month to approve all bills legally drawn against school funds. All teachers' salaries and all current bills are paid monthly without discount.
3. Unusual interest is manifested in organization and instructing in schools. The 12th grade system is being introduced without friction and with interest since new textbooks are adopted and a more definite year's work is outlined.
4. Most of the schools which did not have hot lunch programs have introduced them. In addition to the advantage of a balanced diet for a child at the noon lunch, this program has great educational value. The public generally is invited to stop in at any of the schools at the lunch period and see the program in operation.
5. More than forty busses and cars have contracted to transfer children to schools. All of these busses must be made safe for transporting children. Each must be inspected by a State Patrol Officer. Busses in Eastland County are in excellent condition and rank high in these inspection reports.
6. Visual Education program is in operation. The office of the County Superintendent furnishes pictures and machine for any educational group free of cost.

"The twelve grade system is intended to assist the slow student, giving twelve years to finish a high school course instead of eleven, without penalizing the pupil able to make the course in eleven years."

The above is given in the write-up of schools for public information purposes. Many are not familiar with the law.

## Early High School Athletics

It was during the period covered by the oil boom that high school athletics, especially football, reached its peak of

## EDUCATION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

popularity and tenseness of competition. The age limit was then higher and the question of eligibility was not so closely enforced. In some schools promising material was coaxed from other districts, only attending through the football season, then returning to their home district.

Buster Mills was among the fine players on the Ranger team at this time.

One of the exceptional feats of those days was the kicking of a field goal from a distance of forty-seven yards, and that at an angle, by Ed. T. Cox, Jr., of the Eastland team. Cox must have had an exceptional day on that occasion as a bulletin board at Ranger carried the following item: "Cox 47, Ranger, 0."

## CHAPTER V

# RELIGION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

## Early Churches

According to the best information obtainable, the first church of any denomination organized in Eastland County was a Methodist organization at Davidson Ranch (now the Tanner Community, in the eastern part of the county). Reverend William Monk was a circuit rider on The Palo Pinto Mission in 1865, who, finding the Methodist families of Davidson, Newberry, and Martin in this neighborhood, organized a church with them as its members. This organization has long since ceased to exist, probably due to the Texas and Pacific railroads built through the country which made the railroad towns more accessible to the membership.

The second church to be organized in the county was the Providence Baptist Church, about six miles east of Eastland. The minister officiating was W. C. (Uncle Bill) Brashears, a citizen of Parker County who spent much of his time in Eastland County looking after his ranching interests. Those participating in the organization were W. C. McGough and his wife Purline, H. F. Brashears and his wife Sallie, and Caldwell Brashears and his wife Martha. These were soon joined by Enoch and Amanda Dawson, and Jason R. Higgins. There has been some difference of opinion as to the time of the organization but most of the evidence seems to favor 1866. Mrs. Sarah Higgins, a daughter of W. C. McGough and the wife of J. R. Higgins, gave this as the proper date. Providence was the largest Baptist church in Eastland County at the time of the organization of The Red Gap Association in 1877 and for some years thereafter.

In 1873 The Rockdale Baptist Church was organized near the present site of the town of Desdemona. Though it has changed its name to Desdemona Baptist Church and has moved its place of worship about one mile, it is still in being and is, perhaps, the oldest organization of any kind in



## RELIGION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

continuous operation in Eastland County. The Eastland Masonic Lodge runs a very close second.

After the organization of the county, churches of several denominations were instituted in its various parts. The Presbyterians were especially active in the Southwest part of the county; the Church of Christ and the Christian Church in the Mansker's Lake, Eastland, and Rising Star areas; and the Methodists had organizations at Rising Star, Jewel, Desdemona and Eastland.

### Camp Meetings

Owing to the distance to be traveled by the settlers, the danger of possible attack by the Indians, and the uncertainty of the weather, regular services were not attempted during the winter months of the early days. As summer came on and the meager crops were laid by, however, the cattle were worked and preparations made for the annual camp meeting. The time was usually set a year or more ahead. As it approached, the men and boys would assemble at an appointed place and build a brush arbor sufficiently large to meet all requirements. Each family expecting to camp would also prepare an arbor or other form of protection sufficient to meet its needs and those of any visitor who might claim its hospitality. The dressing rooms were usually the beds of the wagons with the sheet over the bows. A mirror, if available, was pinned to the sheet.

Meals were cooked around an open fire in the "Dutch Ovens and Deep Skillets." The present-day stoves and ranges have nothing on them when it comes to producing appetizing and palatable food.

As it was not often necessary for the campers to return home during the course of the meeting, they belled and hobbled their work and saddle stock. They had little to bother them except to keep a close lookout for Indians and to see that their firearms were in good condition.

There were usually several preachers in attendance, but one was chosen to take the lead, the others sitting close by in the "Amen Corner." Those who have never heard the fervent "amens" of the old-time preacher have had something missing from their religious experience.

Yes, those good old days are gone. It is no longer necessary

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that one go to religious gatherings with firearms at his side. The roads have been shortened by better ones, and there are faster means of transportation. The houses of worship are better built and lighted, and are more comfortable. The preachers are better educated, if not more zealous and consecrated. It is no longer necessary for them to toil throughout the week at manual labor to provide the necessities of life, leaving but little time for pastoral visits and study. There are many people today who are just as consecrated and Christ-like as then, yet we enjoy looking back with love and admiration to those days and people.

The following, copied from "A History of the Baptist in Erath County" will give the reader some insight into the life and experiences of the pioneer preacher:

John Lamson — Native of Kentucky; became a Christian early in life and began preaching; came to Erath County about 1876; in organization of the Palo Pinto Association; spoken as "Jovial, Laborious, good brother Lamson, who can preach to five churches a year for less than fifty dollars, make a living and laugh half of the time."

### **The Organization of the Red Gap Baptist Association**

There has been a great deal of discussion as to the Red Gap Baptist Association, both as to its organization and dissolution. Unfortunately, a copy of the minutes of its first meeting is not available and many of the references in others are somewhat vague.

The fact that the Sweetwater Baptist Association, which claims to be a continuation of the Red Gap body, numbered its 1886 session as its tenth would place the organization date as being 1877. This date is erroneous, however, as the following quotation from *The Texas Baptist* dated September 25, 1879, will reveal:

#### **A CALL FOR ORGANIZATION.**

August 16, 1879.

A convention of delegates from churches adjacent met with Read (Red) Gap Baptist Church (At the present site

## RELIGION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

of Cisco) to discuss the propriety of organizing a new association as appropriately explained by Elder C. G. Stephens, who was called to preside over the meeting. J. R. Lamb was appointed Clerk. On inquiry we found the following churches represented: Providence, Emmaus, Bethel, Palestine, and Read (Red) Gap.

Brother J. W. Brashears offered the following resolution which was unanimously adopted; Resolved, that it is expedient that we organize a new association, and that the moderator appoint a committee to report on constitution, articles of faith, rules of decorum and order of business. The committee was appointed as follows: Elder W. B. Cobb, and brothers J. G. Drake and J. B. Lam(b). On motion Elder C. G. Stephens was added to the committee, said committee to report at our next meeting. "Resolved that we meet with Read (Red) Gap Church Friday before the second Sunday in October, 1879, to organize the Association.

Elder W. B. Cobb was chosen to preach the introductory sermon; Elder George P. Johnson was chosen as alternate.

Elder George P. Johnson offered the following resolution; Resolved, that this body tender their thanks to the brothers and sisters of Read (Red) Gap Church and the community in general for the hospitalities extended us during our stay with them. 2nd. That the clerk forward a copy of the minutes of the convention to the *Texas Baptist* for publication.

Adjourned to meet with Read (Red) Gap Church, ten miles West of Eastland City, on Friday before the second Sunday in October, 1879.

J. B. Lamb, Clerk

Elder C. G. Stephens, Moderator

Again in *The Texas Baptist* of date October 23, 1879, there is a brief reference from J. M. Ashburn of Eastland County, stating that the Red Gap Association had just closed its first session with the Red Gap Church of Eastland County, that it was comprised of eight churches, and that Brother Parrack of the General Association was present. The foregoing information should settle the matter as to the time of its organization; the question as to the demise of the body is a more difficult problem.

The Red Gap Association soon had affiliations from as far west as El Paso. That the territory was too large was quite evident. In addition, there were some personalities involved. At the 1884 session The Red Gap Association had

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agreed to meet with the Cisco Church in 1885, but since Cisco was no longer affiliated with the Association, some of the brethren connected with the churches of the Cisco Association felt that it would be unwise to meet there. This same view was expressed by the pastor and by the Cisco brethren.

Following the 1884 session several churches met at Cisco on October 4, 1884, and formed The Battle Creek Association, the name being changed to The Cisco Association the following year. Accordingly, the Board agreed for the meeting to be held at Sweetwater and the secretary, J. B. Scarborough, published a notice of the change in *The Texas Baptist Herald* of July 16, 1885, about two weeks before the meeting of the Association.

D. J. B. Link, editor of *The Texas Baptist Herald*, attending this meeting at Sweetwater, gave the following facts in his "Notes by the Way" (Issue of August 6, 1885):

Owing to some misunderstanding about the place of meeting this year, Cisco having been originally selected as the place of meeting, and afterwards the church having united with a different association, several of the members and the pastor having expressed their opinion that it would be unwise for this association to meet there under the circumstances, and all this at a very late hour, but too late it is said to inform all the churches. So it turned out that some messengers met at Sweetwater and some at Cisco. Telegrams and other communications were passed. The brethren at Sweetwater concluded to leave the name "Red Gap Association" to the brethren meeting at Cisco, and they would take the name of Sweetwater Association to avoid any conflict or difference of opinion that might arise out of the misunderstanding and this they did.

The minutes of the Sweetwater Association carried in parenthesis beneath the name "The Sweetwater Association," the title "The Old Red Gap Association." The minutes also contained a copy of the resolution adopted by this body stating that they feel that they are "The Red Gap Association," but in order to prevent confusion, they were willing to surrender the name.

Dr. Link continues his remarks in the next issue of *The Texas Baptist Herald* (August 13, 1885), stating, "From Brother Stephens (of Cisco), we learned that three or four churches of Red Gap Association, had met there but ad-



## RELIGION IN EASTLAND COUNTY

journed to meet at Gunsight on Friday, the first Sunday in October. Bro. Stephens seemed pleased that the brethren at Sweetwater had taken the course they did, when he learned the facts, and hopes that it all has been wisely directed for the best."

Apparently a few churches endeavored to carry on as The Red Gap Association. This conclusion is further demonstrated by the fact that the announcements for the associations in 1886 contain the following, "Red Gap, on Friday before the first Lord's Day, with Mount Hope Church, Stephens County."

Since no minutes are available of the Red Gap Association after 1884, the writer presumes that with the support of only a few weak churches, the body soon dissolved or simply ceased functioning after 1886. This pioneer organization is carried on at present in the splendid work of The Sweetwater Association.

(The foregoing is largely taken from *The Texas Baptist Herald* issues of several months from 1876 to 1879.)

## Early Ministers of the Gospel

As disclosed by the marriage records of Eastland County, the following were among the preachers living in Eastland County, a few across the line in other counties, prior to 1880:

J. R. Northcutt	M.G.	1874	Baptist
John R. Stuart	M.G.	1875	Baptist
S. H. Trimble	M.G.	1875	Methodist
J. M. Lane	M.G.	1875	Methodist
R. C. Forbes	M.G.	1875	Baptist
John Lamson	M.G.		Baptist
J. M. Strickland	M.G.		Affiliation Unknown
James M. Lingo	M.G.		Baptist
J. M. Ashburn	M.G.		Baptist
Ad Lawrence	V.D.M.		
John Gilliland	M.G.	1877	
W. C. Sparks	M.G.	1877	
John Yielding	M.G.	1877	
W. E. Hawkins	V.D.M.	1878	
C. G. Stephens	M.G.	1878	Baptist
James R. Prickett	M.G.	1878	
George E. Fair	M.G.	1878	Methodist

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W. H. Goode.....	M.G.....	1878....	Methodist Episcopal
John H. Lynch.....	M.G.....	1879	
H. P. Mann.....	M.G.....	1879....	Methodist Episc., N.
J. H. Collard.....	M.G.....	1879	
T. M. Price.....	M.G.....	1879	
H. F. Reynolds.....	M.G.....	1879....	Baptist
J. M. Brading.....	M.G.....	1879	
Wm. F. Jones.....	M.G.....	1879	
W. B. Cobb.....	M.G.....	1879....	Baptist
S. F. Russell.....	M.G.....	1888....	Baptist

Under the constitution of 1845, no minister of the gospel or priest of any denomination was eligible to membership in either house of the legislature.

## CHAPTER VI

# SOCIAL LIFE IN EASTLAND COUNTY

### Social Activities

Among the events in the social life of this period for the rural people were the Sunday afternoon singings. The periodic singing conventions were probably the most enjoyed. The old Estey Organ was the standby for accompaniment. The singing class in a community would usually meet on one or more Sunday afternoons each month with local leaders who had at least a speaking acquaintance with the theory and practice of music, but who made up for any shortcomings in this line by their enthusiasm and wholehearted participation in the work at hand.

The district conventions, which were usually held about four times a year, were always well attended and those who have never been present at one of these sessions have missed something worthwhile. The people came from miles around in buggies, wagons, horseback and sometimes on foot. They arrived early and stayed late. The singers were often so numerous that all could not participate at one time. As some tired, others would take their places. A committee would make a list of all who would lead in the singing and each was called in turn. Leaders who were especially popular would be urged to hold the floor longer than the regular time.

The old-time leaders have for the most part passed on, but a few remain. Ed Jones, of Gorman, is one of the old-timers. If you happen to harbor the thought that he does not have a warm place in his heart for those days and the people of that time, just feel him out. He will tell you more about the good singing and splendid hospitality enjoyed by those participating in these meetings than you will be able to repeat for some time to come.

An event which did not occur often in Eastland County but which was somewhat common in counties where more

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corn was raised and in which there was a considerable Negro population, was the old fashioned corn husking or shucking as it was usually called. A farmer with a considerable corn pile, who for any reason desired to have it shucked, would sometimes give a corn shucking.

The farmer had the unhusked corn piled near the crib in which he wished to store it. The Negroes formed a semi-circle around the rim of the pile and at a signal from their leader began a chant, a part of which was, "Rabbit in de garden." The one witnessed by the writer was at Stephenville.



## CHAPTER VII

# OUTLAW ACTIVITIES

### Train and Bank Robberies

The only train robbery in Eastland County in its history occurred in 1882. Jim Moss is said to have been the express agent at the time of the holdup which was planned by three or more local men, but only three participated in the actual robbery.

In some manner the railroad officials had received notice that the job was to be attempted and a party of Texas Rangers were aboard the train. When it arrived at the station, the robbers rushed to the express car and demanded that the messenger turn over to them all of the money in his care. While they were thus engaged, the porter, who had been instructed what to do, rushed to a coach and notified the Rangers of the attack. When the Rangers neared the express car, the shooting began. The robbers grabbed about four hundred dollars in silver, overlooking a large amount of currency, and made for their horses. They made their escape for the time being, but one of them was wounded in the arm and breast. This led to his capture at a residence near Merriman a few days later. The others avoided arrest for some time, but were finally captured, tried and convicted. They were given terms in the state penitentiary.

The first bank to be robbed in Eastland County was probably in January of 1887. Four men rode into Cisco one snowy day, walked into the bank and demanded its money. The cashier, Mr. L. C. Leveaux, prompted by the fact that four six-shooters were pointed in his direction, was reported to have handed over about five thousand dollars.

Some citizens of the town are said to have followed them for a short distance. One of their number fired a shot in the direction of the robbers. The answer of the robbers was to turn around, hold up the sacks of money and motion to the posse to come and get them. This they were not inclined to

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do. None of the robbers were ever tried for their crime although one was indicted for it. Some say that he escaped from jail and was never recaptured.

Captain Jenkins, in his diary of approximately that date stated:

The bank at Cisco was robbed. As the robbers were leaving town they met some farmers coming in and sent word back that they were going to return and clean up the town. Lieutenant Governor Wheeler, who lived in Cisco, wired Governor Ross substantially as follows: "Bank Robbed. Robbers threaten to return and rob the town. What can be done?" to which the governor is said to have answered, "If not men enough in town to protect it, burn and evacuate."

The second bank to be robbed in Eastland County was the State Bank at Carbon on the 23rd day of December, 1927. The raid occurred during the noon hour when the robbers probably supposed that a part of the employees would be at lunch. But business matters had detained them and when the two men entered the building, they found Dr. S. P. Rumph, Elbert Trimble and his son Lynn of the bank force, and customers Lon Reed and a Mr. Johnson there. They were all ordered into the vault. The robbers thought that they had locked the door, but a contrivance had been placed on the locking mechanism to prevent such an act. The robbers had scarcely left the building before those in the vault opened the door and gave the alarm.

A light rain had fallen which made the tracking of the robbers' car comparatively easy and it was followed nearly to Desdemona where the trail was lost. However, one of the men had been recognized during the robbery. The parties were soon captured, tried, convicted, and sentenced to the penitentiary. They barely escaped being given the death penalty, many of the jurors having favored that punishment, it was reported.

### **The Bank Robbery at Cisco in 1927**

On December 23, 1927, there was perpetrated in Cisco one of the most daring bank robberies ever to have occurred in this part of the state. About noon, probably expecting that

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a part of the bank's personnel would be out to lunch, four men (Marshall Ratliff, Henry Helms, Robert Hill, and L. E. Davis) drove into the peaceful city, busy with its Christmas shopping. They robbed the First National Bank of \$12,400 in cash and \$150,000 in non-negotiable securities.

The robbers drove their big black sedan into the alley on the north side of the bank building where Ratliff (a former resident of Cisco), dressed as Santa Claus, entered the bank. He was immediately surrounded by the children present with whom he carried on while the other members of the gang entered. Alex Speer, the cashier, engaging (as he thought) in the spirit of the occasion, shouted, "Hello, Santa Claus," but he was soon to be disillusioned. In the meantime, the other robbers had gone to the pay windows, demanding money and securities.

Mrs. B. F. Blassengame, one of those in the bank, soon discovered the hoax. She snatched her child and, defying the threats of the bandits, rushed to a nearby telephone and called the police. The City Hall was only a block away and Officers Bedford and Carmichael were soon on the spot. Bedford came from the street to the corner of the bank building. Carmichael approached from the alley side and gave battle to the robbers, one of whom had remained in the car. The officers were seriously handicapped by the presence of non-combatants and soon fell victims to the robbers' bullets. Bedford lived only a few hours, and Carmichael only until the seventeenth of the following month.

As the robbers left the bank, they kidnapped a couple of small girls (Laverne Comer and Emma May Robertson) ten and twelve years old respectively. They used the girls as shields to protect themselves from the bullets of the officers and citizens who had hastily procured arms and joined in the fray. Turning southeast, a flat tire gave them trouble — some one may have thoughtfully shot a hole through it. They then attempted to commandeer the sedan of a Rising Star family by the name of Harris, driven by a thirteen-year-old son, Woodrow, and undertook to start it. The Harris boy, with rare presence of mind, had taken the key from the ignition as he left the car, rendering it useless to the looters. They hastily transferred the booty and the little girls back to their own car and continued their hurried getaway. They soon took a side road, followed closely by officers and citizens. After a



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few miles, they ran the car into the brush and continued their flight on foot. The girls were left in the car where they were found unharmed by Guy Dabney, who was in close pursuit.

Officers from Eastland and surrounding towns were promptly notified of the affair. They soon reached the abandoned car and took the trail, finding bloody bandages and other evidence that at least one of the bandits had been wounded. Night coming on, however, they were unable to trail them farther and called off the search for the time.

The next trace of the fugitives was found near Putnam where they abducted a youth by the name of Carl Wylie whom they forced to accompany them for twenty-four hours in the territory contiguous to Cisco. They then headed for Wichita Falls in a stolen car, but ran into a trap which had been set for them at South Bend in Young County. Doubling back, they turned off of the main road towards the Brazos River brakes some miles out, closely pursued by the veteran police officer, Cy Bradford (no braver ever carried a gun), and others.

When nearing the brakes and the end of the lane, the robbers leaped from their car and broke for cover. Ratliff was shot down by Bradford. The others made their escape for the time being. Hill and Helm were so closely hunted for the next few days that they were unable to procure food and medical attention. On making their way to Graham, they were arrested without offering any resistance by Deputy Sheriff Gentry Williams of Young County and E. H. Little, a deputy sheriff from Comanche County.

The three were brought to Eastland, placed in jail, and indicted for murder and robbery with firearms — on two or more counts each. In one of the cases in which Ratliff was tried the jury disagreed as to the verdict to be rendered. Some favored the death penalty; others, imprisonment for life. This case was then transferred to Taylor County where a verdict of guilty bearing the death penalty was returned.

Ratliff was transferred to the penitentiary at Huntsville and placed in the death cell. There he played the insanity dodge so well that a case of lunacy was about to be filed against him there, when such a charge was filed in Eastland County. So he was returned there and placed in jail. He continued to act crazily and doubts as to his sanity arose in the



## OUTLAW ACTIVITIES

minds of many of the people. When pricked with a needle while pretending paralysis, he would not flinch, and for days at a time would eat nothing but filth. He was kept on a cot on the second floor of the jail and deputy Tom Jones was hired to guard and attend him.

On the day that he killed Jones, he had, as usual, seemed very sick and crazy. When jailor Kilbourn began to lock the doors to the run-around and otherwise prepare for the night and Jones had fed Ratliff, Ratliff hid behind the corner of a cell. When the officers were not looking, he dashed down the stairs and opened the drawer to the desk where the key to the outside door was sometimes kept. He failed to find the key but secured Officer Jones' pistol. Seeing that he could not get out of the building without a key to the outside door, he ran back up the stairs to force the officers to give it to him. He met Jones and shot him three times in the body, Jones rolling to the bottom of the stairs. Before Ratliff could turn, Kilbourn was upon him and in the ensuing struggle, Ratliff fired two shots in an attempt to kill him but missed. Kilbourn finally overpowered Ratliff, took the now-empty gun from him and locked him up.

In the meantime Kilbourn's daughter, Malague, who had tried frantically to get into the fray, but was unable to do so on account of the locked door, fired several shots. These, with those by Ratliff, brought many people from the town. They were too late to be of any assistance, even if they had been able to get into the jail.

Deputy Jones lingered between life and death until the next day when he passed on.

That night a multitude of men and boys, no one of which could remember the presence of any other, took Ratliff out of jail and hung him to a telephone guy wire nearby.

## Mob Activities in Eastland County

Mob activities in Eastland County centered, for the most part, in the period from 1880 to 1905.

While plowing in his field in 1894, a man by the name of Parks was shot from ambush, supposedly by a member of the mob whose actions he had strongly opposed. Also, a man by the name of Olliver was whipped by a party of men in 1885.

One afternoon in 1884, two young men rode up to the

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community store at Pioneer. They indulged in some boisterous talk and an exhibition of horsemanship and handiness with the lariat. One was little more than a boy, full of life, and the other without a serious criminal record, boastful and inclined to big talk. After spending some time at the store, they mounted their horses and took the road towards Rising Star. The next morning their lifeless bodies were found hanging from the limbs of a tree. If society was benefited in any way by this crime, it would be hard to find it. The hearts of two families were crushed, and the life of an old man was embittered for the remaining years of its existence. Mob law was ever thus.

## CHAPTER VIII

# MILITARY ACTIVITIES

### Veterans of the Confederacy

In February of 1886, a meeting was held to consider the organizing of those who had served in the Confederate Army (they refused to be called Ex-Confederates) into an association.

Those present were Captain June Kimble, Colonel G. W. Shannon, Captain J. L. Steele, Dr. S. H. Stout, John T. Yeargin, W. H. Day, Henry Hallum, C. R. Johnson and J. T. Hammons.

A committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws, consisting of John Hardeman, John T. Yeargin, and June Kimble.

They were instructed to report at a meeting called for April 8, 1886. More than one hundred veterans answered the call and the association was organized with Dr. S. H. Stout, President; Col. G. W. Shannon, Vice President; June Kimble, Secretary; John T. Yeargin, Treasurer, and the much-beloved Rev. (Uncle Jackie) McClure; Chaplain. The membership roll increased to more than five hundred.

For about twenty-five years an annual encampment was held in the county, most of them at Confederate Park in Eastland. As the "Grey Line Grew Thin", however, these meetings were abandoned. The last call was answered by a remnant, old and few. This meeting was at a dinner prepared for the old heroes by their friends about the year 1910.

Much information as to the Confederate Association and its activities is not available, owing to the minutes having been misplaced. It is known, however, that L. D. Ladd was its president, J. R. Haley and H. S. Schmick were vice presidents, and E. A. Hill, son of a Confederate soldier, was secretary-treasurer in 1919. In this same year, E. A. Hill was made Attorney-in-Fact for the organization. Also, Confederate Park was sold to T. A. Bendy, who sub-divided it into

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

lots and sold them. The old park became the home of many good, substantial Negro citizens.

On July 18, 1942, there was only one of those who wore the gray surviving in Eastland County — a Mr. Perdue, 97 years of age. Mr. Perdue lived in Cisco in his last years, but passed to his reward several years ago.

### Spanish-American War

Insofar as the writer has been able to ascertain, the following is a list of those who volunteered for service in the Spanish-American War from Eastland County:

John H. Addington  
William D. Addington  
George C. Bender  
Taylor W. Covington  
Edwin T. Cox  
Nathaniel P. Harbin

Lewis M. Harbin  
Formwalt Hood  
Granville R. Keel  
Edward Patton  
John O. Shelton

The foregoing were members of The Second United States Volunteer Infantry which saw ten months' service in Cuba. It was part of the Army of Occupation that assisted in keeping order in the young nation while it was organizing its government. John O. Shelton is now living at Abilene. John, William Addington and the writer are the only ones living (as of January, 1946).

The following appeared in *The Eastland Chronicle* in 1898:

Hood's Regiment left New Orleans for Santiago on the steamer Berlin. There are twelve Eastland County boys in Hood's Regiment. In the very nature of things all, perhaps, will never return. May the God of battles watch over and restore them to loved ones left behind.

Sometime later about fifteen Eastland County boys left Eastland for Weatherford to join a company being organized at that place. In *The Eastland Chronicle* of March 17, 1898, was this article:

Fifteen of the gallant boys of Eastland County left the depot Wednesday for Weatherford to join Captain Baker's



## MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Company for the Fourth Regiment. A large crowd gathered at the depot to see them off. Mayor Connellee, Judge Chastain, and C. D. Spann made stirring speeches to the boys and bid them God-speed in their departure. The names of these brave boys are as follows: Claude Chastain, Charley McClure, Harvey Oates, Frank Broadwell, W. S. Hopson, Frank Connellee, John Hallum, Coleman J. Belmont, and Guy Brelsford, all of Eastland; John Whiteside, Green Malone, and Charley Paschal of Cisco; J. L. White of Carbon; Frank and Crockett Kelley of Ranger; and Billie McDonald of Strawn.

Camp Meade, Middletown, Pennsylvania, June 5, 1899.

### FIRST IN AND LAST OUT

TEN MONTHS OF SERVICE IN SANTIAGO PROVINCE BY THE SECOND IMMUNES. RECORD FOR LONGEST SERVICE IN CUBA. THEY DID NOBLE WORK IN STAMPING OUT YELLOW FEVER AND SMALLPOX. ARE REALLY IMMUNES.

(Special Correspondent to *The Post*)

The Second Immunes were then in camp preparing to be mustered out, Colonel H. Y. Grubbs commanding, was the first regiment of volunteers to land in Cuba after the surrender of the Spaniards at Santiago. For a period of ten months, the regiment was a part of the Army of Occupation and was continuously engaged in the difficult work of stamping out the epidemics. Yellow fever and smallpox were playing sad havoc in the towns of Guantonamo, Songo, Cristo, Gibara, Porte Padre, Los Tunas, and Holguin.

When the regiment reached Gibara and Holguin on the 28th of last October, there were at least 800 cases in the two towns, with an enormously large death rate. During the ten-months service in Cuba, the regiment lost 39 men (two by accident and one by suicide). They left five sick in the General Hospital at Holguin, who are expected to recover and return home. Although the regiment was in the fever and smallpox district for months, none of them died of the disease. They have the right to claim the record for the longest service in Cuba, and also whatever merit may be attached to the word "immune."

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

No regiment in Santiago Province furnished more officers and men for detached service than the Second. If these men could have had their choice, it would have been a campaign of short duration and then a return to their occupations. Somebody had to do this work and the Second Regiment did it well and uncomplainingly. The following complimentary letter from General Leonard Wood, commanding the province of Santiago, shows this:

The Commanding Officer, Second Regiment, U.S.V.I., Holguin. Headquarters Department of Santiago, May 22, 1899. — Sir; In relieving the Second Regiment, United States Volunteer Infantry, from duty in the Department Of Santiago De Cuba, the department commander takes great pleasure in expressing his thorough appreciation of the excellent service that this regiment has performed. It was the first of the volunteer regiments to arrive in Cuba and is the last of the volunteer regiments to leave Cuba.

Its service includes several months of duty in Santiago during the most unhealthy portion of the occupancy of the city. During this time it performed especially difficult service in a highly satisfactory manner. It was then transferred to the North Coast of Cuba for duty in a district thoroughly infected with small-pox. Its services in suppressing this epidemic were of the highest character, and have resulted in great saving of life and in restoring to a comparatively normal and healthy condition probably the most pest ridden part of Cuba. The Regiment is at present thoroughly efficient and well disciplined.

In conclusion, I desire to say that in leaving Cuba, your regiment carries with it the respect and good will of the people of the district in which it has been serving.

Very Respectfully

(Signed) LEONARD WOOD

Brigadier General Commanding

In presenting the above letter to the regiment, Lieutenant Colonel H. Y. Grubbs of the Sixth Regular Infantry, who had been in command of the Second many months and who had endeared himself to the volunteers by his splendid soldierly and gentlemanly qualities, said:

## MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Such a letter from a commanding general is not lightly given, and this letter should be a source of pride to every member of the regiment. The commanding officer takes this opportunity to express his own appreciation, and to congratulate the regiment that so signal a recognition of its various services on the Island is received at its departure.

By Order

H. Y. GRUBBS, Lieutenant Colonel

Lieutenant Colonel Grubbs was afterwards killed in action in the Philippines.

*The Chronicle* printed the above as a compliment to the gallant boys from Eastland County who were members of the immune regiment because, "It will be a pleasure and a source of pride to the fathers, mothers, relatives and all friends of those noble young soldiers, to know from the highest authority that they made such a record."

## The American Legion in Eastland County

The Dulin-Daniel Post of the American Legion was first organized at Eastland by the late Colonel Robert D. Gordon and a group of Eastland veterans, less than a year after World War I came to an end, November 11, 1918.

The organization received its charter on October 3, 1919. Colonel Gordon was the post's first commander. In that year, following the cessation of hostilities, The American Legion, today one of the world's largest organizations of former soldiers, was in its infancy. At the time of the granting of a charter for the Eastland Post, the National headquarters of the Legion was located at 19 West Fourth Street in New York City.

The following is a list of the charter members of the Post:

Ralph D. Mahon  
K. B. Tanner  
J. H. Caton  
O. C. Bruce  
Murray F. Gill  
M. H. Huston  
H. Brelsford, Jr.  
H. S. Murphy

C. A. Halgren  
W. M. Raines  
George O. Harrell  
Frank Gilbert, Jr.  
W. D. Lamb  
H. J. Tanner  
H. G. Eppler, Jr.

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

Twenty-three veterans of World War I have served The Dulin-Daniel Post as Commanders during the past quarter of a century. Four of these have served more than one term.

K. B. Tanner, Sr., one of the charter members of the ex-servicemen's group, served two terms — 1925 and 1926. H. P. Crouch was Post Commander in 1930-31; Earl Francis in 1933-1934. Henry Pullman, who served as head of the organization for three years, leads all Post Commanders in length of service in that capacity. He was post commander in 1939, 1940, and 1941, and is one of the most active members of the Dulin-Daniel Post.

### The U.S.S. Eastland

A new attack transport — an addition to Uncle Sam's mighty naval fleet — was named "The U.S.S. Eastland" in honor of Eastland County in 1944. The new fighting ship carried the Marine Corps and other U.S. assault troops to the scene of battle operations and landed them on the beaches with amphibious craft and weapons. This craft, following its landing operations, then took aboard the wounded and transported them to base hospitals.

Printed below is a letter concerning the U.S.S. Eastland which was received by the County Clerk:

U. S. Naval Air Station,  
Astoria, Oregon Library,  
September 14, 1944

County Clerk, Eastland County, Texas.

Dear Sir:

As you probably know, there is a transport being built on the West Coast, which is to be named, Eastland, after your county, and I would like to have a sketch of the history of Eastland County, if you can get it for me, to be placed in the library for the time being.

We are going to have a part of the crew stationed here for a while and I would like to have it here so that they can see it in the meantime; and when the ship goes to sea, the sketch will go with it as a part of the equipment.



## MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Thanking you for any interest you may have in the matter,

CONSTANCE M. HOOVER, Librarian

Following this request to Miss Johnnie Hightower (Eastland County Clerk), Mr. Ed. T. Cox, Eastland County Historian, Mrs. Hagaman of Ranger, and Miss Maifred Hale prepared a brief history of the County which was placed in the library of the naval combat vessel, the U.S.S. Eastland.

In a letter to Miss Johnnie Hightower, Addison Grant Noble, chaplain of the U.S.S. Eastland, wrote: "In the very near future she [the ship] will be commissioned, and I, as Chaplain, know that any interest which the people of Eastland County might show in The U.S.S. Eastland, will be deeply appreciated by the officers and men."

## World War II

Never in their history have the people of Eastland County shirked their duty to the State and Nation. This was true for the early conflict, the war with Mexico. This has been true for all the wars up to and including World War II. The County has a right to be proud of its record. The patriotic sons and daughters of Eastland County spared no effort to help bring the war to a victorious close. Many sons fought and some gave their lives in the cause of freedom. Eastland County really did its part in that major conflict, the Second World War.

## Epilogue

Looking back down the vista of the years, the writer sees the beginning of Eastland County, the early struggle for existence, for law and order, the growth of the cattle business, the oil boom, the wars in which Eastland County participated — through various difficulties, the people of Eastland County have persevered.

Many changes have taken place in Texas during these years. Many changes have taken place in the Nation. Progress has been made along many lines. The onward march of science has revolutionized living conditions. The automobile

## HISTORY OF EASTLAND COUNTY

and airplane have replaced the horse. Progress in communication — the telephone, telegraph, radio, television — has made the world grow steadily smaller. With all of these improvements, however, have come problems. Instead of hordes of fierce Indians on the warpath or vicious outlaws, the people of Eastland County have the possibilities of atomic and hydrogen warfare to face.

Looking forward to a future filled with the opportunities and the dangers of an Atomic Age, the people in Eastland County are still undaunted. The same brave spirit that sustained the settlers of a wild, untamed wilderness is still evident in their descendants. Their ancestors had savage Indians to face, but they have the hydrogen bomb. *Pioneers of today, carry on!*

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